

1 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
2 SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA
3 WEST PALM BEACH DIVISION
4 CASE NO. 16-CV-80655-ROSENBERG

5 **JAMES TRACY,** .

6 Plaintiff, .

7 vs. .

8 **FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY : West Palm Beach, Florida**
9 **BOARD OF TRUSTEES,** December 8, 2017

10 Defendant. .

11 VOLUME 8

12 JURY TRIAL PROCEEDINGS
13 BEFORE THE HONORABLE ROBIN L. ROSENBERG
14 UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

15 APPEARANCES:

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1 *THE COURT:* Good morning. You may be seated.

2 Can I get the status of the case before the jury comes
3 in?

4 *MR. CURLEY:* We decided we are done and we will rest
5 our case.

6 *THE COURT:* We will do that when the jury comes in at
7 9:00. What about rebuttal?

8 *MR. LEO:* No rebuttal.

9 *THE COURT:* I will tell the jury that they will get a
10 free day today.

11 We are not ready to get it to the jury today. We have
12 some work to do still on final rulings on the motions, motion,
13 and also the jury instructions.

14 I thought we would take between now and 9:00 to cover
15 ground on the jury instructions and maybe after the jury
16 leaves, if we haven't finished it, we will finish it, and if
17 you have supplemental arguments to make, you can supplement
18 your motion. There is no evidence, but if there is anything
19 supplemental you want to add, I will hear that, and the Court
20 should be in a position to --

21 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* You will allow Plaintiff to make
22 a motion as well?

23 *THE COURT:* Sure. What I handed out we will mark
24 Court Exhibit 3 and Court Exhibit 4, so everyone will be
25 assured these will be part of the overall record. Obviously

1 court exhibits don't always go back to the jury.

2 Court Exhibit 3 is a redlined version and Court
3 Exhibit 4 is a clean version.

4 In the interest of completeness, we will go through
5 it.

6 I have made some changes, some of which incorporate
7 what came up yesterday. I adopted some of the arguments that
8 were made by one or other party, and in other instances I
9 didn't, and I can explain why on the record.

10 I will say this just from the outset so everybody
11 knows, there was a pervasive objection made by Defense
12 throughout the document, and I will address it right now, what
13 the Court's ruling is and why.

14 Defendant had asked that the Court deviate from the
15 4.1 pattern instruction by adding the word "substantial".

16 The pattern instruction uses the word motivating. The
17 Defendant requested the Court use the phrase substantial
18 motivating factor. The Court declines to deviate from the
19 pattern as requested by the Plaintiff for these reasons:

20 First, the parties explain why substantial should not
21 be used. Annotations to the pattern acknowledge case law that
22 uses substantial, but the pattern uses motivating to eliminate
23 confusion from using the word substantial and motivating.

24 Secondly, substantial and motivating can be confusing
25 because of a double modifier in different parts of the jury

1 instruction can lead to confusion. The Court does not want to
2 deviate from the pattern. That is the ruling that will apply
3 each and every time the Defendant had requested the Court to
4 make that change.

5 Cover page, Plaintiff.

6 MR. BLICKENSDERFER: No objection.

7 MR. CURLEY: Your Honor, taking into consideration the
8 Court's ruling, I want the record to reflect that we object to
9 the Court's ruling, and we reserve our objection for purposes
10 of appeal.

11 THE COURT: Yes. Again, any time the Court has made
12 its ruling on subsequent issues, you can restate your objection
13 as well to that or other issues. You have a ruling on
14 substantial.

15 Is the cover page acceptable?

16 MR. BLICKENSDERFER: Yes.

17 THE COURT: Court's -- to the Defendant.

18 MS. HUFF: Yes, your Honor.

19 THE COURT: Court's instruction to the jury.

20 MR. BLICKENSDERFER: No objection.

21 MS. HUFF: No objection.

22 THE COURT: Duty to follow instructions.

23 MR. BLICKENSDERFER: No objection.

24 MS. HUFF: No objection.

25 THE COURT: Consideration of direct and circumstantial

1 evidence.

2 MR. BLICKENSDERFER: No objection.

3 MS. HUFF: No objection.

4 THE COURT: Credibility of witnesses.

5 MR. BLICKENSDERFER: No objection.

6 THE COURT: No objection?

7 MS. HUFF: No objection.

8 THE COURT: Expert -- there we go, that comes out now.

9 Do we all agree that comes out?

10 MR. BLICKENSDERFER: Yes, your Honor.

11 THE COURT: That is why we go over these things
12 several times just to make sure. That comes out. Okay.

13 So, here we go, next page, responsibility for proof,
14 Plaintiff's claims, preponderance of the evidence. So, what
15 you can see here is that -- actually, I don't know that there
16 was any issue here.

17 Take a look at this one and see if this is okay.

18 MR. BLICKENSDERFER: Your Honor, there is no change
19 from last night's red line discussions to today.

20 THE COURT: That is right, there is not. It is still
21 showing the red line because I think it was from the original
22 version, but I kept it because no one objected. I am double
23 checking. That is acceptable to the Plaintiff?

24 MR. BLICKENSDERFER: Yes.

25 THE COURT: Defense?

1 MS. HUFF: Yes, your Honor.

2 THE COURT: The next page I made changes, and I want
3 you to know I took the Defendant's second affirmative defense
4 and added it to the first affirmative defense. It appears to
5 be the same thing, I did not see any harm in putting them
6 together.

7 The Court doesn't fully understand the distinction
8 between one and two, which is why it initially eliminated two
9 altogether.

10 As to number three, I would need -- if you are
11 persisting, Defense, on number three, I need you to show me
12 where in the affirmative defenses you are getting that.

13 Why don't you take a look at what I have done now in
14 the context of everything, you know, we discussed and see if
15 you think that is acceptable. I will ask Defense first and
16 than go to the Plaintiff.

17 MS. HUFF: Yes, your Honor, in the complaint I think
18 we had an affirmative defense for contributory negligence or
19 comparative negligence. Under Rule of Civil Procedure 8(c), an
20 affirmative defense must be stated and was stated in the second
21 amended complaint and that is how this is stated here, that he
22 contributed -- his actions contributed to his termination.

23 THE COURT: Which are you talking about now, number
24 two or number three?

25 MS. HUFF: Number three.

1 *THE COURT:* That is where it says, FAU claims Tracy's
2 claims are barred or limited to the extent that his termination
3 resulted from his own actions.

4 What page -- I would need to see -- I would assume I
5 would need to see you show me in Docket Entry 329, which is the
6 affirmative answer and second amended complaint, which
7 affirmative defense that is.

8 < i>MR. BLICKENSDERFER: Docket Entry 329, page 75,
9 paragraph eight.

10 *THE COURT:* Let me take a look at that.

11 Page 75, paragraph eight, Plaintiff's claims are
12 barred or limited to the extent that Plaintiff's damages
13 resulted from his own actions.

14 Okay, now we found it. Tell me what you said about
15 the legal authority. What were you saying as far as
16 contributory negligence?

17 *MS. HUFF:* To the extent Plaintiff tried to strike
18 many of the affirmative defenses several times, to the extent
19 they are arguing it is not a true affirmative defense, it is to
20 that defense that the Plaintiff contributed to his own harm,
21 that is listed under -- the Plaintiff actually contributed to
22 his own harm, we pled it in the second amended complaint, and
23 we would like it here in the jury instructions.

24 *THE COURT:* Wouldn't we need a question on the verdict
25 form to match up with it?

1 The first one talks about FAU discharged Tracy for
2 retaliatory reasons. That matches up with the second verdict
3 form, I think what is now our second verdict question, verdict
4 form question, which is that FAU would have discharged Tracy
5 from his employment even if FAU had not taken Tracy's blog
6 speech into account. That is what the whole case is about.

7 How were they going to reconcile that affirmative
8 defense in a jury instruction when it is not on the verdict
9 form?

10 *MR. CURLEY:* It can be on the verdict form, and that
11 is a good point. We presented a substantial amount of evidence
12 to show that he in fact caused his own termination. He didn't
13 do things that would have prevented his termination, and Dean
14 Coltman testified he wanted to be fired, it seemed like he
15 provoked it. That is exactly the point here.

16 As your Honor knows, we believe he is doing it for the
17 purpose of writing, whether it is a blog or book, whatever it
18 might be. Yes, he did, he fired himself, that is pretty much
19 it.

20 *THE COURT:* So, number one, it wasn't an affirmative
21 defense, number two, it was not -- can we hold on one second.

22 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* There were multiple motions to
23 strike the affirmative defenses, and they were overruled.

24 *THE COURT:* So, the affirmative defense stands.

25 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* Right, over our objection, your

1 Honor.

2 *THE COURT:* Okay.

3 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* If I may respond. First of all,
4 defendant acknowledges this is not a tort action, this is a
5 First Amendment retaliation action. There is a pattern for
6 that.

7 What they are asking for is essentially -- that
8 question on the verdict form that says what they have done,
9 what they did in the absence of his speech, if he caused that
10 termination, that is where it is resolved. There is no
11 additional question did he contribute for his own firing on the
12 basis of his speech. If they found that the speech was a
13 factor, that would kind of up end First Amendment retaliation
14 claims. It makes no sense.

15 As it is plead in the amended complaint, it seems to
16 go more towards damages, in fact eight states damages, and so I
17 don't think that this is a defense that can preclude his claim
18 if they find that he contributed.

19 I need to see a case that supports this position, and
20 second of all, we need to go into what contributed means in
21 retaliation First Amendment. I don't know if that exists.

22 *THE COURT:* Do you have any case law in a First
23 Amendment case for this defense and how it would be -- how it
24 presents itself?

25 *MR. CURLEY:* It is a waiver. When you intentionally

1 engage in misconduct, you intended to provoke this action, that
2 is a waiver. That is an intentional effort to interfere with
3 your rights, and that is what happened here. We put on
4 evidence of that.

5 I don't care if it is a question on the verdict form
6 or not, but it is a theory of our defense and we are entitled
7 to have the jury instructed on that. It is in the affirmative
8 defenses, and we plead it, and we are entitled to that.

9 *THE COURT:* Your position is you want it in the jury
10 instructions and you are indifferent whether it goes into the
11 verdict form.

12 *MR. CURLEY:* I am.

13 *THE COURT:* Let me take a look at that. I will keep
14 that noted right there.

15 Okay, anything else on that page?

16 Is the way the Court combined one and two acceptable
17 to the defendant?

18 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* Your Honor, before we move on --

19 *THE COURT:* I will let Plaintiff respond, but for
20 Defense, anything further on this page for the Defense?

21 *MS. HUFF:* No, your Honor, we accept the stricken two
22 to be combined with one. We are trying to make stricken number
23 three our number two.

24 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* We object to that for the reasons
25 stated previously, and I want to correct the record to reflect

1 that the affirmative defenses, our objections were not
2 overruled. The Court ruled what we did not agree to or what we
3 challenged were treated as denials.

4 *THE COURT:* What Docket Entry was that?

5 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* I don't have it.

6 *MR. LEO:* We are looking for it.

7 *THE COURT:* We will be able to find it. If you find
8 it, let me know.

9 *MR. LEO:* Thank you, your Honor.

10 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* 121, affirmative defense is not
11 an affirmative defense, it would be treated as a denial. 121.

12 *THE COURT:* Let me take a closer look at that one.

13 Then the next page. Otherwise we are okay on both
14 sides, other than the objection you made?

15 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* Yes, we actually like it without
16 two or three. We are okay with the change, your Honor.

17 *THE COURT:* You are okay with the change with number
18 two moving into number one, you hold to the position you don't
19 want number three.

20 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* Correct.

21 *THE COURT:* Defense is okay with this except you want
22 number three.

23 *MS. HUFF:* We would like number three to be number
24 two.

25 *THE COURT:* Duty to deliberate when both Plaintiff and

1 Defendant claim damages. From the Plaintiff.

2 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* No objection.

3 *MS. HUFF:* No objection.

4 *THE COURT:* Next page, public employee, First
5 Amendment claim. Even though through its officials while
6 acting under color of law is part of the pattern, I did remove
7 it because it is not a contested issue and we took this up
8 yesterday. I thought maybe, in light of the conversation
9 yesterday, everyone would agree to that. And then let me go on
10 and explain what else was done.

11 I did adopt what the Defense was raising yesterday
12 about being more specific about speech, and so you can see that
13 it says -- what I did was I defined Defendant's speech as blog
14 speech, because it seemed to be a fair summary of the speech.
15 FAU didn't know about his book, and I don't really think
16 Plaintiff is arguing that his podcasts were the cause. It
17 seems the essence of Plaintiff's case has always been the blog,
18 and so, what I did was, any time in the pattern where the
19 pattern has brackets that says described speech, I used blog
20 speech.

21 And then otherwise, I know that there were parts of
22 the pattern -- we will get to that in the next page. It talked
23 about protected speech, because the effect of protected speech
24 is no longer a -- it is either called blog speech any time the
25 pattern called for a bracket to insert a description of the

1 speech and when the pattern didn't call for that, I used the
2 word speech.

3 That is what the Court did in the first paragraph
4 including taking out officials working under color of law,
5 because that is no longer a contested issue. And I think those
6 are the primary changes.

7 Why don't you look at it, and I will hear from
8 Plaintiff first, and then Defense as to that one page. We will
9 take it a page at a time.

10 MR. BLICKENSDERFER: If I may, your Honor.

11 THE COURT: Yes.

12 MR. BLICKENSDERFER: We would maintain, depending on
13 what the Defendant would like to do as far as having a special
14 instruction on the deal-makers mentality, I don't know what you
15 call it, if they insist on that, we'll insist, even though it
16 is not contested on the under color language, if that does not
17 come in, we are okay with it coming out.

18 THE COURT: We will talk about that special in a
19 moment.

20 I will make a note if special, Plaintiff wants in; if
21 no special on decision maker, Plaintiff wants out.

22 MR. BLICKENSDERFER: Yes.

23 THE COURT: Okay, what else? Any other issues on that
24 page?

25 MR. BLICKENSDERFER: We prefer the original language

1 describing the speech. We would prefer to keep the language we
2 discussed last night.

3 *THE COURT:* Would you say calling Professor Tracy's
4 speech blog speech accurately describes the speech in this
5 lawsuit?

6 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* For the most part, yes. I have a
7 whole argument about what his speech entailed that we were
8 going to get into later, and it is consistent with his online
9 speech, including speech online, his speech on the blog,
10 including blog speech.

11 *THE COURT:* What about Professor Tracy's online blog
12 speech?

13 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* We prefer to the online speech.

14 *THE COURT:* All of the online was through his blog.

15 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* No, social media and podcasting,
16 we appreciate the Court's thinking we are not talking about the
17 substance of his podcasting, but his blog.

18 *THE COURT:* Online blog.

19 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* Right, but it entailed social
20 media as well.

21 *MS. HUFF:* Social media is not in evidence.

22 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* The statement by Professor Morton
23 referenced Twitter, including blog, Morton's statement to the
24 price, and Coltman we argued adopted, references his blog, it
25 is not just limited to his blog. We understand the Court's

1 position on this, we would like to maintain --

2 *THE COURT:* It shouldn't be a debatable issue. I
3 think there is language that both sides should agree to that
4 would encompass the essence of the case.

5 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* To say online blog speech is
6 redundant. It should be blog speech or online speech.

7 *MS. HUFF:* Your Honor, you are saying that we should
8 know what the speech is. This is so difficult to come up with
9 jury instructions because we don't know what Plaintiff's speech
10 allegedly caused his termination.

11 *THE COURT:* The way the Court has written this is what
12 you --

13 *MS. HUFF:* We want to base our objections on the -- we
14 don't know what he was desiring to do and it's necessary to
15 send causation to the jury.

16 *THE COURT:* I understand that is your argument in your
17 motion. For purposes of the jury instructions, is there
18 anything objectionable about the first paragraph as written?

19 *MS. HUFF:* As a default mechanism in this scenario
20 when we don't have a ruling on the J motion, blog speech, which
21 limits it to the Plaintiff's blog, that is all we have in
22 evidence.

23 *THE COURT:* And while acting under color of state law,
24 you wanted that out.

25 *MS. HUFF:* Yes, it is not contested.

1 *THE COURT:* Second paragraph, any objection from
2 Plaintiff?

3 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* For clarification purposes, is
4 this when we start talking about protected, and eliminating
5 that? I don't see where the word protected --

6 *THE COURT:* You will keep going, still on the
7 presumption, hypothetical scenario where the ruling has been in
8 the Plaintiff's favor, and taking into account everything we
9 talked about yesterday.

10 Again, all the Court did is it -- when it called for a
11 descriptive in the pattern about the speech, it called it blog
12 speech. It did take out the word protected because it was
13 never defined, because there is an agreement that section that
14 spoke about protected speech, both sides wanted it out.

15 If you take it page by page, you can understand and
16 maybe it will make more sense.

17 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* I understand, your Honor. My
18 standing objection to blog speech for the time being remains.
19 Other than that, no objection to the rest of the paragraph.

20 *THE COURT:* And from the Defense.

21 *MS. HUFF:* Yes, your Honor, there are two places in
22 the second full paragraph where the conflict of interest policy
23 is referenced in the collective bargaining agreement. The
24 conflict of interest policy in evidence is in the Collective
25 Bargaining Agreement, it is not merely referenced. This is an

1 argument they made on summary judgment, that the conflict of
2 interest is in many places, they are rehashing that. They are
3 trying to expand the conflict of interest policy for the
4 purpose of raising the five counts dismissed from the case.

5 *THE COURT:* This is a new argument, this wasn't made
6 yesterday. You are raising this for the first time today.

7 *MS. HUFF:* Yes, we would like it to read conflict of
8 interest policy in the Collective Bargaining Agreement, take
9 out reference.

10 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* This objection was not made
11 yesterday. We agree this most accurately reflects the
12 testimony from everybody, that the policy is referenced in the
13 CBA and comes from other sources. To say it is a policy in the
14 CBA would be misleading.

15 *THE COURT:* Okay. Anything else from the Defense?

16 *MS. HUFF:* We would like to note it is in two places
17 in that paragraph.

18 *THE COURT:* Yes.

19 *MS. HUFF:* We would like reference removed from both
20 of those. Besides that point, we are fine with everything in
21 the second paragraph.

22 *THE COURT:* Again, the Plaintiff's position is?

23 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* The same, your Honor.

24 *THE COURT:* The conflict of interest policy is in the
25 CBA, correct?

1 MR. BLICKENSDERFER: It is incorporated in the CBA,
2 applies to all employees.

3 THE COURT: But that is where one finds it, in the
4 CBA?

5 MR. BLICKENSDERFER: One could find it there, the form
6 is not there. The policy encompasses the form, guidelines,
7 those things are not in the CBA. The CBA doesn't cross
8 reference the guidelines in the form. You have to know what
9 the policy consists of. To say the policy is in the CBA, that
10 is misleading, the policy is much bigger than that.

11 THE COURT: I will take a closer look at that.

12 The next page. One thing you will see was added,
13 again, based on the ruling the Court hasn't made yet, just to
14 provide the framework for a working draft, I added the sentence
15 "the Court has already found that Professor Tracy's blog speech
16 was a matter of concern." As soon as the Court makes that
17 finding, that is one change, and the rest of the changes were
18 all agreed to.

19 So it reads, to succeed on his claim Professor Tracy
20 must prove the following by a preponderance of evidence:
21 Professor Tracy's blog speech was a motivating factor in FAU's
22 decision to discharge Professor Tracy.

23 From the Plaintiff.

24 MR. BLICKENSDERFER: We are okay if the Court ends up
25 ruling that way. We think it could be simpler by saying that

1 his blog speech was constitutionally protected. That ruling
2 will encompass our position.

3 *THE COURT:* The analysis the Court is making is a
4 determination whether it was a public concern.

5 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* If that is the analysis, we are
6 fine with this.

7 *THE COURT:* Okay. From the Defense.

8 *MS. HUFF:* As to the Court's additional language, we
9 would like to reserve our objection based on the pending motion
10 of law. If the Court overrules us on that motion, this is a
11 fair explanation.

12 *THE COURT:* Okay. Everything okay on the next page?
13 Plaintiff first.

14 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* I am reading the second paragraph
15 now.

16 *THE COURT:* Okay.

17 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* Yes, we are okay with that.

18 *THE COURT:* Defense.

19 *MS. HUFF:* We would like to note on the -- we are fine
20 with the ones removed. As to the one that remains, we would
21 like the word substantial inserted, understanding your Honor's
22 ruling on that. We are preserving our objection on that.

23 *THE COURT:* You have a standing objection any and all
24 times I removed substantial.

25 *MS. HUFF:* Thank you.

1 MR. CURLEY: Thank you.

2 THE COURT: The next page is the page that begins
3 with, after you take out the deleted part in the verdict form
4 that I will explain in a moment, you will be asked to answer
5 questions about this factual issue. And it goes down --
6 looking off my red line copy, it might be easier to read the
7 clean copy to see how it reads.

8 So it says, with respect to what you must decide.

9 So, what the Court did was I took out "the parties
10 have agreed that FAU officials acted under color of state law
11 so you should accept this as a true and proven fact."

12 Everybody wanted the second element removed. Where it
13 says the second element, looking go off the red line version,
14 note: This does remove the definition for protected speech.
15 Because of that, I removed the word "protected" from the entire
16 instruction because it is no longer defined. That is why I use
17 the word speech. I made that ruling assuming the Court rules
18 the way the Court has drafted about a matter of public concern.

19 Everyone wanted the third element out and we reworded
20 the last part because now it's just -- there is now only a
21 single element.

22 To be clear, I used the word speech here, not blog
23 speech.

24 The pattern sometimes says describe speech and
25 sometimes it just says speech. When it says describe speech, I

1 used blog speech. When it says speech, I left it as speech.
2 And when it says protected speech, I used speech because
3 protected speech is no longer a defined term.

4 Both sides wanted that out, and the Court has
5 incorporated the statement again if it is consistent with how
6 the Court will rule. If not, we will have to revisit all of
7 this on the prior page about the Court having found that
8 Professor Tracy's blog speech was a matter of public concern.

9 So, with that explanation as to what the Court did,
10 Plaintiff first.

11 Let us know when all of our jurors are here.

12 MR. BLICKENSDERFER: I understand what your Honor's
13 thinking process was there. The pattern uses protected after a
14 finding of protected speech.

15 In light of the Court's potential ruling, taking that
16 away from the jury, we would ask on the prior page, after a
17 matter of public concern, comma, and thus is protected speech.
18 At that point the jury knows the Court has found the blog
19 speech is protected. That is a finding the Court is taking
20 from the jury.

21 Thereafter, we would like to have protected speech.
22 We appreciate the Court's trying to balance what is a fair
23 instruction. We note our objection to taking protected out
24 thereafter, and have a standing objection every time the Court
25 takes it out. We appreciate what the Court has done, we are

1 letting the Court know our position. We think it would be fair
2 to insert it on the prior page if the Court is going to take it
3 out. We will be okay with that if the Court does the other.

4 *THE COURT:* It appears both sides wanted the second
5 element out.

6 The second element says, if the Court makes a finding
7 that it is a matter of public concern, then he engaged in
8 protected speech. It appears to be one in the same.

9 So, thus, your argument is on the prior page, perhaps
10 if the Court should entertain the sentence, the Court has
11 already found that Professor Tracy's blog speech was a matter
12 of public concern and thus is protected speech, and therefore
13 any other time the pattern instruction had protected, keep the
14 word protected.

15 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* Yes.

16 *THE COURT:* The backup, if the Court doesn't add that
17 word, go with speech.

18 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* Yes.

19 *THE COURT:* From Defense.

20 *MS. HUFF:* We disagree with the argument that this is
21 taking it away from the jury. The jury never decides what is
22 protected speech, that is a question of the Court in all
23 instances.

24 There are two threshold questions, the first, whether
25 the Plaintiff spoke as a citizen on a matter of public concern.

1 The second is the Pickering balancing, those are two questions
2 the Court must consider before it goes to the jury. It is
3 confusing to put protected speech anywhere in here.

4 *THE COURT:* Why do you think the pattern instructions
5 are written that way?

6 *MS. HUFF:* Sometimes -- it says in the comments to the
7 instruction sometimes there is actually a fact issue whether
8 the speech was made. We don't dispute that.

9 *MR. CURLEY:* I need to jump in here. I don't mean to
10 been cynical here, please don't take it that way.

11 In some cases you might have he said, this, this,
12 this, identified, and in some cases you have a protected case
13 and some of it wouldn't be, so you would be talking to the jury
14 about that.

15 In this case, we don't even know what speech we are
16 talking about. We have a blog, and who knows, and if you hang
17 the label protected speech on it, you are protecting the entire
18 blog. That is misleading and prejudicial.

19 It was their burden to identify the speech in cases
20 where the pattern would be applicable. They haven't met their
21 burden and now we are struggling with it.

22 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* We have a whole response to that
23 argument that I understand the Court will hear soon.

24 *THE COURT:* Okay. Our jury is here. That is good
25 timing.

1 Just to finish up on the next page, so I know we are
2 done on that page that begins with, in the verdict form that I
3 will explain, is there anything else? There is a standing
4 objection to substantial.

5 I know Plaintiff wants protected.

6 Any other issues on that page?

7 *MS. HUFF:* Sorry, your Honor, I thought you were
8 asking for Plaintiff's position.

9 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* No, the rest is fine, your Honor.

10 *THE COURT:* Defense.

11 *MS. HUFF:* With the Court noting our standing
12 objection on substantial, everything else is okay.

13 *THE COURT:* Okay. So, quickly, so we know where we
14 stand on the next few pages, we'll not address the specials
15 now, I will tell you on the very next page, the only changes
16 for the most part were that I did not accept -- I think it was
17 from Defense -- certain portions that were not pattern.

18 There was a sentence that Professor Tracy exercised --
19 may not take action against Dr. Tracy for that reason. I am
20 overruling that request and not allowing that in as deeming it
21 not necessary in light of the Court's view that the pattern
22 covers all of these issues.

23 And similarly, the Court is not permitting, but FAU
24 may discharge Professor Tracy for any reason, good or bad,
25 fair, unfair, even based on mistaken facts, so long as it was

1 not substantially motivated to retaliate for blog speech. The
2 Court is not permitting that as well. The Court believes the
3 pattern addresses that, so the Court is not adopting that,
4 having heard argument on that yesterday.

5 In all other respects, the only changes were either
6 taking substantial out or calling something speech. And this
7 was an instance where the pattern would have referred to what I
8 believe is just speech, this didn't call for a descriptive, and
9 that is why it was written that way, following the pattern
10 instruction.

11 So, with overruling the Defendant's requests, and with
12 all standing objections remaining as to the substantial, is
13 there anything objectionable from the Plaintiff on this page?

14 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* No, your Honor.

15 *THE COURT:* Defense.

16 *MS. HUFF:* Your Honor, all of our previous objections
17 we would like to sustain or keep in.

18 We understand the Court's ruling on the stricken
19 language, but FAU may discharge Professor Tracy for any reason,
20 good or bad, fair, unfair, the pattern does mention that. We
21 would like it to read, even if based on mistaken facts, because
22 the Plaintiff has made --

23 *THE COURT:* I heard argument yesterday, I don't want
24 reargument. I appreciate it. I considered the argument, that
25 was yesterday.

1 The question now is, is there any other objection that
2 is not of record? It definitely is of record, you preserved
3 it. Any other?

4 MS. HUFF: No, we would like the even if based on
5 mistaken fact language, no other objections besides the many we
6 have preserved.

7 THE COURT: Okay. Then the next page, the Court also
8 declines to deviate from the pattern where Defense requested
9 the sentence begins with, if FAU's reason is one that might
10 motivate a reasonable employer, and goes down to the sentence,
11 FAU to be false, period, that is redlined out on Court Exhibit
12 3, and the Court considered argument yesterday on that and is
13 declining to adopt that, not being part of the pattern and of a
14 view the pattern takes care of the issue.

15 And furthermore, consistent with the way the Court has
16 ruled on substantial, you will see that is out, and otherwise
17 those were the changes to that page.

18 Any objection from Plaintiff?

19 MR. BLICKENSDERFER: No, your Honor.

20 THE COURT: Anything new? All standing objections
21 from Defense remain. Any other objections?

22 MS. HUFF: We prefer of all of our previous objections
23 and I will highlight the language that the Court struck. If it
24 is not here, we want it there. The special instruction --

25 THE COURT: We have not discussed that yet. I want to

1 get through the last one and we will put this aside and bring
2 our jury in.

3 The last page before we get to the special is, really,
4 just consistent with what the Court has done, it adhered to the
5 pattern. So, I am not using substantial, consistent with the
6 ruling, and I don't think there was anything much more to that
7 page which begins with, if you find in Professor Tracy's favor.

8 Anything objectionable from the Plaintiff?

9 MR. BLICKENSDERFER: Other than the standing objection
10 taking out protected, we are good with this.

11 THE COURT: And your position is protected would only
12 be in the pattern that refers to protected.

13 MR. BLICKENSDERFER: We want to stick with the
14 pattern.

15 THE COURT: From the Defense.

16 MS. HUFF: Nothing besides the standing objections.

17 THE COURT: Okay. We will take a two-minute break and
18 then we will bring our jury in to have you rest and we will
19 resume.

20 (*Thereupon, a short recess was taken.*)

21 THE COURT: Really quickly, this is a question for
22 Defense.

23 The legal doctrine for what you are requesting in --
24 let's look at Court Exhibit 3, on the page with the affirmative
25 defenses so that I fully understand, and it is on the record.

1 There is no objection to combining defenses 1 and 2,
2 responsibility for proof. There is a dispute for number 3 that
3 says, FAU claims that Professor Tracy's claims are barred or
4 limited -- and you have not provided legal doctrine and case
5 law, you have not provided any case authority even in the
6 original submission.

7 What is the case and legal doctrine you are relying
8 on, not argument, just legal doctrine and case? You can start
9 with the legal doctrine, what is the legal affirmative defense?

10 MR. CURLEY: Waiver.

11 THE COURT: Waiver?

12 MR. CURLEY: Yes.

13 THE COURT: Do you have any case law?

14 MS. HUFF: Not in a First Amendment retaliatory case.

15 THE COURT: You looked and have not found it?

16 MR. CURLEY: The Court knows you can waive
17 constitutional rights, you can waive any constitutional right
18 that I can think of.

19 THE COURT: I just wanted to understand the legal
20 doctrine.

21 Okay. Let me ask you to put these on her desk. You
22 have my one with the notes, and I am going to bring the jury in
23 and I will pick up -- I need something to work off of to get to
24 that decision-maker one. Where do I have that? There is a
25 version -- where is Court Exhibit 4? I need a redline version.

1 All of these go on Melanie's desk, and this will go on
2 afterwards when we talk about the jury instructions.

3 All right. Let's bring our jury in.

4 *(Thereupon, the jury returns to the courtroom.)*

5 THE COURT: Okay, good morning, everyone. You may be
6 seated. Welcome back.

7 So, at this point, I turn to the Defense to ask
8 whether you have any further witnesses.

9 MR. CURLEY: We have no further witnesses, your Honor,
10 Defense rests.

11 THE COURT: Okay. And then I would turn to the
12 Plaintiff to ask, do you have any rebuttal case?

13 MR. LEO: No, your Honor.

14 THE COURT: Okay.

15 All right. Ladies and gentlemen, so what that means
16 is all of the evidence is closed, so this is going to be a
17 short day for you. It was going to be short anyway, but it is
18 going to be even shorter.

19 We are going to release you and then, when you come
20 back Monday morning what will happen is, you will have a set of
21 jury instructions and you each will have a set, I will read
22 them, and you will take the jury instructions back with you
23 when you deliberate. Then the attorneys will give you closing
24 arguments, and you will go back to deliberate. That is what is
25 happening on Monday.

1 With that, I need to make crystal clear nothing has
2 changed about the rules of the road. Just because the evidence
3 is in doesn't mean that is like a license to go and talk and,
4 you know, review media and research and things of that nature.
5 To the contrary. You have come so far, so much effort has been
6 put into the case, and you are almost there.

7 The only time you start -- not really, the only time
8 you talk about the case among yourselves, because you never
9 talk with anyone else, is when you are back in the room
10 deliberating, and all of the evidence is brought back there. I
11 do not let you start deliberating until all of the evidence is
12 brought back there. Nothing has changed. I am explaining
13 procedurally what happens.

14 All you will hear is the law that I will give you, and
15 we will continue to work on that, and the argument which the
16 attorneys have a right to do on behalf of their clients.

17 Please, please, please, be ever vigilant, I know you
18 have been every day, it is not that I am questioning it. I am
19 saying this because I will not see you until Monday. You are
20 like in a bubble, not what your friends say, relatives say,
21 media, nothing but the witnesses and documentary evidence that
22 was presented in the courtroom. It is very important you are
23 insulated so that is all that is in your mind about this case.

24 Again, you should not be forming any opinions or
25 discussing it with each other because you have not heard the

1 law. You will be able to apply the law to the evidence and as
2 a group, as a jury selected to be fair and impartial in this
3 case, you will go back to the room and you will deliberate.

4 I will tell you we will order you lunch on Monday.
5 For anyone who brings lunch, you don't need to on Monday. By
6 the time the instructions are read and closing arguments it
7 will bring us to at or about lunch time. We will give you a
8 menu in the morning and we'll order your lunch and you can
9 deliberate with no interruptions to your day, and your
10 interruptions will be however long they are. That is within
11 your control.

12 Any questions about scheduling or anything I have just
13 explained?

14 Okay, seeing no hands, we'll release you and see
15 everybody back Monday morning at 9:00 a.m. Have a great
16 weekend.

17 (*Thereupon, the jury leaves the courtroom.*)

18 THE COURT: Okay, let's pick up with the jury
19 instructions, if we could. I heard argument on everything
20 other than the specials.

21 I think that we have the Defense special instruction
22 with respect to decision maker, and I think I heard Plaintiff
23 say the other day that if the Court's ruling is consistent with
24 how the instructions have been written thus far, again, without
25 the benefit of full argument, and no ruling made, this would be

1 an attempt to put the instructions together, the Plaintiff
2 would not be seeking that special, correct?

3 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER: Correct, your Honor.*

4 *THE COURT: So, the Defense special, as I understand*
5 *it, really boils down to ultimately the decision maker -- and*
6 *you have a lot of language in the first paragraph, and in the*
7 *second paragraph, but ultimately you are asking the Court to*
8 *give an instruction about -- this is your last two lines: A*
9 *decision maker is a person with the power to terminate an*
10 *employee. In this case, the decision maker is Diane Alperin.*

11 I will hear argument first from the Defense on that.

12 It would be helpful if you have legal authority that
13 you rely upon. This is not the first case tried and gone to a
14 jury where we have, you know, a Governmental entity as a
15 Defendant. In fact, there is an instruction on Governmental
16 entity and, you know, a Governmental entity, as that
17 instruction indicates -- let me pull that up again.

18 Actually the third one, the fact that Florida Atlantic
19 University is a Governmental entity must not affect your
20 decision anyway. When a Governmental entity is involved, it
21 may act only through people as its employees, and in general, a
22 Governmental entity acts within the scope of their duties as
23 employees of the Governmental entity.

24 I will let you make argument, but I always like to
25 know if there's any legal authority for a jury instruction

1 where the judge is instructing the jury as to defining a
2 decision maker, and also who the decision maker is and, of
3 course, I know you have other language there and it may
4 ultimately -- did I recall the Plaintiff objected to it, or
5 there may be middle ground of agreement that may be speaking to
6 the concept of a decision maker and the suggestion as to who?
7 Maybe you agree or disagree with who the Defendant has
8 designated as the decision maker. In any event, I will let the
9 Plaintiff respond.

10 Let's hear the argument on the Defendant's special
11 instructions right now.

12 MS. HUFF: Thank you, your Honor. As to the decision
13 maker instruction, or as to the decision makers in general -- I
14 will get to the argument about the law specifically in jury
15 instructions, but we do have law defining a decision maker
16 saying a decision maker in the termination context is someone
17 with the power to terminate, not merely to recommend
18 termination. That is an Eleventh Circuit case, Kamesky versus
19 Dean, 148 Federal Appendix 878, 879 through 80, Eleventh
20 Circuit case, 2005, defining what decision maker means in the
21 termination context.

22 Additionally, the Alvarez case we cited to yesterday
23 discusses the importance and pretext context, and that is where
24 this would come up. You look at the employer's beliefs and not
25 perceptions. Here, where we talk about the Florida Atlantic

1 being an employer, we heard so many employed by FAU, we do not
2 want the jury to be confused whose decision they are to be
3 considering. We want a decision by Dr. Alperin, they should
4 consider her as the decision maker.

5 A Southern District of Georgia case, within the
6 Eleventh Circuit, Pattee versus Georgia Port Authority, 477
7 F.Supp. 2d 1253, 1265, Southern District of Georgia, for
8 intuitive protected conduct to be a substantial motivating
9 factor in the decision, the decision maker must be aware of the
10 protected conduct. This reflects the decision maker's
11 awareness, so we have to define who the decision makers are.

12 I did look at decision maker instructions that have
13 been made. The cases that I found specifically involved a
14 specific factual instance involving sexual harassment cases and
15 a cat's paw theory where maybe a supervisor did a bad act, but
16 there was a decision maker above them. We don't have that
17 here. That would render a decision maker instruction
18 prejudicial.

19 And your Honor, I think there might be an attempt --
20 we are trying to avoid dragging in upper-level administrators
21 in the case that are already dismissed in their capacity,
22 specifically the president of the university.

23 There is no evidence regarding prejudicial involvement
24 and that is why he was dismissed in his individual capacity,
25 and if they try to drag him in above Dr. Alperin, that would be

1 inappropriate.

2 There are no other faculty members involved either.

3 That should not be implicated or somehow suggested. We need to
4 focus their attention on the decision maker in this case, it is
5 undisputed she is the one who made the decision.

6 *THE COURT:* Okay. And from the -- let me pull that
7 back up -- from the Plaintiff.

8 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* Yes, your Honor, our objection is
9 noted in Docket Entry 388.

10 *THE COURT:* Okay, hold on a second. That is a
11 separate process here if I pull that up.

12 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* I could read it. I want it noted
13 for the record.

14 The Plaintiff objects to the inclusion of this special
15 instruction as unnecessary in light of instruction 4.1 which
16 already says that a public employer may discharge a public
17 employee for any reason, good or bad, fair or unfair. And if
18 the jury does not find the speech is a motivating factor, the
19 jury is being charged it must not second-guess FAU's decision,
20 and you must not substitute your judgment with FAU's judgment
21 even if you don't agree with it.

22 That makes this instruction redundant.

23 *THE COURT:* Where are you reading from? What is at
24 the top of the page?

25 *MS. HUFF:* Your Honor, I believe he is reading from 45

1 at Docket Entry 388, this is the parties' joint instructions.
2 We included had ours in bold, and the Plaintiff added a
3 paragraph at the end explaining why they objected to the
4 instruction.

5 *THE COURT:* Is it in the redline version we have been
6 talking about?

7 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* That is what I was looking for.

8 *THE COURT:* That is what I have in front of me, that
9 is easiest.

10 *MS. HUFF:* It looks like it is not in there, their
11 response. It was not a proposed instruction, it was a response
12 to our proposed instruction. That is, I believe, what Mr.
13 Blickensderfer is reading from.

14 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* Your Honor, I don't know what
15 page this is, Court Exhibit 3, in the paragraph that begins
16 FAU --

17 *THE COURT:* Hold on, I have a lot going on here, hold
18 on one second. Are you pointing to anything that I need to
19 refer to?

20 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* No, other than Court Exhibit 3,
21 redline today. Earlier in 4.1, what we have agreed the jury
22 can hear is, but a public employer may discharge a public
23 employee for any good reason, good, bad, fair, unfair. There
24 is no reason to read that again.

25 Later on it says, you must not second-guess the

1 decision and substitute --

2 *THE COURT:* Right.

3 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* That is redundant and does not
4 need to be repeated. It would be prejudicial to do so.

5 *THE COURT:* You are talking about the first part?

6 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* Right. With respect to the
7 decision makers, it seems to me FAU is back pedaling saying
8 only Alperin is the decision maker. They admitted in their
9 papers -- reading from Docket Entry 269, in the summary
10 judgment papers where they say Plaintiff offers no material
11 evidence to show that the decision makers, Drs. Coltman and
12 Alperin, even considered Plaintiff's speech, and goes on.

13 So, they can make all the argument that they want, the
14 only person who could make the call was Alperin, and Alperin
15 didn't consider it. That is the argument they can make, but
16 that should not be in the Court's instructions.

17 There is no standard on this particular decision maker
18 issue. We do not agree to it, we think it would be overly
19 prejudicial to kind of -- we actually think it would be wrong
20 to tell the jury only consider Alperin when they said Alperin
21 and Coltman were decision makers. This is argument area.

22 *THE COURT:* Hypothetically, if they propose putting
23 Alperin and Coltman there, would there be an objection? Is
24 there an objection to any instruction on who the decision
25 makers were, or is it to how they have defined a decision maker

1 and who they have identified as a decision maker?

2 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* I think all of the above. I
3 don't think we should agree to this instruction. We should
4 stick to the patterns that are available. This is not a
5 special that we would agree to, particularly with respect to
6 the decision maker when they are changing the decision who can
7 make the judgment call. The evidence is in evidence at this
8 point, and there is no legal authority to say, yeah, there is
9 only one or the other, and just these two that we should be
10 comfortable with.

11 *THE COURT:* You think you should be able to argue
12 whoever they want?

13 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* No, it has to be someone in the
14 chain of command, whether it came from the president or
15 president's appointee --

16 *THE COURT:* They want to make sure there is not an
17 implication that the president, who is no longer a Defendant --
18 is there a preview of how the Plaintiff is going to be arguing
19 this issue so we can avoid any problems and so maybe it could
20 be handled in argument?

21 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* It is safe to say we are not
22 going to say the president made this call in our closing
23 argument.

24 *THE COURT:* Who are you going to say made the call?

25 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* Coltman and Alperin.

1 *THE COURT:* From Defense.

2 *MS. HUFF:* On 4.1, Plaintiff's request comment
3 section, under Roman numeral III, individual liability.

4 *THE COURT:* I looked at that yesterday, that is
5 individual liability.

6 *MS. HUFF:* It does discuss the official decision
7 maker.

8 *THE COURT:* Let me pull that up.

9 4.1, and if we go to the section on -- it would be on
10 page 52, Roman numeral III, individual liability.

11 *MS. HUFF:* Yes, your Honor.

12 *THE COURT:* A decision maker is officially liable
13 under 1983.

14 *MS. HUFF:* Right. At the end of that paragraph, there
15 is a sentence that says, "the model instruction presumes that
16 the Defendant's status as an official decision maker is
17 undisputed or has been resolved by the Court.

18 "In a case where a genuine fact dispute exists as to
19 the Defendant's status as an official decision maker, the
20 instruction and verdict form should be adapted accordingly,"
21 and provides principles of law that may be helpful in
22 fashioning a jury charge.

23 I would like to direct the Court's attention to, "in
24 the termination context, a Defendant is an official decision
25 maker if he or she has the power to effectuate termination,

1 even if the termination decision is subject to further review.
2 On the other hand, a supervisor who merely has the power to
3 recommend a termination is not an official decision maker even
4 if the recommendation is rubber stamped by the actual decision
5 maker."

6 It is undisputed that Dr. Coltman did not have the
7 ultimate authority to terminate Professor Tracy. She could
8 make recommendations, but Dr. Alperin had the authority to make
9 the final decision, and it was Dr. Alperin who drafted the
10 final letters, made the final decision and effectuated the
11 termination decision.

12 *THE COURT:* When I read this last night, I noted this,
13 I did note it's in the context of an individual liability suit,
14 which we don't have.

15 What you are saying is that the principles articulated
16 within an individual liability suit might be applicable to
17 expand upon the definition of the official decision maker even
18 though it is not an individual liability case.

19 *MR. CURLEY:* We agree with the Court. Our concern is,
20 as the Court noted, if you don't have an instruction on this,
21 what does it enable? And we'd rather confine the argument to
22 the facts of the case, that being clearly that Vice Provost
23 Alperin was the person that made this decision, and prevent
24 argument on the peripheral stuff that the Court allowed in for
25 other reasons. There is some suggestion that those people are

1 the ones --

2 *THE COURT:* Well, we already heard a proffer from the
3 Plaintiff that there will be no argument made that the people
4 you call peripheral people are not going to be argued to the
5 jury in closing that they were decision makers.

6 They are going to be arguing Coltman and Alperin
7 presumably based on, you know, based on what evidence is in the
8 record, and presumably the argument will be in line with the
9 evidence in terms of what each of the respective roles were,
10 whether it was one recommended and the other one ultimately
11 made the decision, but that is what I just heard.

12 *MR. CURLEY:* I heard it as well.

13 *THE COURT:* They are citing to your summary judgment
14 motion. Did you all put forth those were the two decision
15 makers? It looked like they were citing from the Defendant,
16 calling them both the decision makers.

17 *MR. CURLEY:* I am not sure, but I know what the
18 evidence was at trial. I think that is what the jury
19 instructions are supposed to be based upon, so that is what I
20 would like the Court to do.

21 The summary judgment motion, I don't mean to make
22 light of that, your Honor, but the summary judgment motion may
23 have referred to Dean Coltman providing information, which is
24 what the testimony was, that Diane Alperin relied upon.

25 *THE COURT:* What would you been arguing about Dean

1 Coltman's role and Vice Provost Alperin's role, I don't want
2 you to give away your closing, but vis-a-vis the decision
3 making issue?

4 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* I would like to hand this over to
5 who is preparing for that argument.

6 *THE COURT:* What is the proffer on the closing on that
7 limited issue so we know what we are talking about?

8 *MR. BENZION:* We do intend to argue that they were
9 involved in the retaliatory discipline efforts and decision to
10 terminate him, both Coltman and Alperin were part of that
11 decision.

12 *THE COURT:* And you would be relying on respective
13 roles based on the evidence?

14 *MR. BENZION:* Yes.

15 *THE COURT:* You would be referring to anybody as an
16 ultimate decision maker, is that fair to say, or talking about
17 them in the context of their respective roles?

18 *MR. BENZION:* I think they both contributed to the
19 decision, and that is what we will be arguing. That is what
20 the evidence plainly showed.

21 *MR. CURLEY:* I can't argue with that. That is what
22 the evidence was. That being said, I would still like the
23 instruction because the jury needs to know, okay, this is what
24 we base our decision on. They need some guidance on that.

25 *MR. BENZION:* Your Honor, may I add one more thing?

1 *THE COURT:* Yes.

2 *MR. BENZION:* The Plaintiff would like to point to the
3 Defendant's Exhibit 206 in evidence which demonstrates that Dr.
4 Coltman did have the authority to discipline and terminate, a
5 termination letter signed by Dean Coltman to another professor,
6 the authority is there, it is in the record.

7 *THE COURT:* Defense is saying it doesn't disagree with
8 the fact that they both contributed.

9 Okay, I think we've heard argument on all of the jury
10 instructions, right? I think so.

11 So, let me just put this aside for a moment.

12 *MS. HUFF:* Your Honor, as to our special requested
13 instruction, we see it as in three parts, I want to make it
14 clear for the record, one is the decision maker we just
15 discussed, our position is clear.

16 The second is language about not being able to
17 second-guess the supervisors' beliefs and business judgment. I
18 believe that appears earlier in the instruction. We would like
19 the supplemental language in there and think it should be in
20 there. For your consideration, your Honor, it is from the same
21 cases that the pattern cites to, it just elaborates on the
22 point.

23 And the third is mistaken belief or erroneous facts.
24 I understand your Honor's ruling on that, that is why we added
25 that as well in the special instruction, and we would like that

1 as well.

2 *THE COURT:* All right. Let me bring this back and we
3 will go into any argument.

4 Okay, at this point we'll hear argument. Plaintiff
5 wanted to make a motion and argument, and so what is the motion
6 and what is the argument? Can I ask approximately how much
7 time you are going to be using?

8 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* I don't think more than 30
9 minutes.

10 *THE COURT:* We still have to finish jury instructions.
11 You know what the Court knows and what the Court has heard, try
12 to direct the Court to the primary points you want.

13 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* We will move for a Judgment as a
14 Matter of Law on the retaliation claim with respect to the
15 essential element of his speech, that Professor Tracy's online
16 speech and blogging regarding Sandy Hook and mass casualty
17 events were constitutionally protected.

18 Plaintiff also renews all legal motions at Docket
19 Entry 247 previously made, including arguments and motion for
20 summary judgment with respect to the policy and with respect to
21 the issue of qualified immunity.

22 The Court mentioned yesterday if there is anything
23 Plaintiff left off with respect to the protection of the speech
24 he could address this today. I will not address what I have
25 already addressed. I will stick to what is new.

1 I neglected to talk about the initial decision. There
2 must be an initial determination whether the speaker has spoken
3 in his role as an employee or citizen.

4 It is our first position that Professor Tracy spoke in
5 his capacity as a private citizen on a personal issue or hobby
6 outside of work hours. Defendant conceded when they insisted
7 that he use a disclaimer on his blog to publicly announce to
8 the world that he was blogging in his private capacity and not
9 in any official capacity on behalf of FAU.

10 The law is well established that private citizens have
11 a First Amendment right to criticize public policies. Bradley
12 versus Computer Science Corp., 643 F.2d 1029, at 1023, Fourth
13 Circuit, 1981.

14 Regardless, even if this was within the scope of his
15 employment, Plaintiff was speaking on a matter of "public
16 concern." A matter of public concern is one that relates to
17 any matter of political, social or other concerns to the
18 community. Connick versus Myers, 461 U.S. 138, at 146, 1983.

19 The purpose of the public concern threshold test is to
20 prevent federal courts from becoming "a round table for
21 employee complaints over internal office affairs." To let the
22 Court appreciate that, that is why we are saying he was
23 blogging in his private capacity, he was not blogging about
24 internal affairs at FAU. That is the Plaintiff's position.

25 Here the news events that were the subject of mass

1 media coverage and critiquing of the Government are a subject
2 of legitimate news interest, just ask the media coverage that
3 has been outside.

4 Alperin admitted he was writing on matters of public
5 interest and "speech by public employees on a matter related to
6 their employment holds special value precisely because the
7 public employees gain knowledge of matters of public concern
8 through their employment." That comes from *Lane versus Franks*,
9 134 supreme Court 2369, at 2379, 2014.

10 Under Rankin versus McPherson -- would the Court like
11 me to submit the citations to the case later to save time?

12 *THE COURT:* That is fine.

13 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* Under Rankin versus McPherson,
14 "the inappropriate or controversial character of a statement is
15 irrelevant to the question whether it deals with a matter of
16 public concern."

17 In addition, Professor Tracy's speech is political
18 speech that constitutes political expression as relates to gun
19 control and political speech is the broadest protection. This
20 is *McIntyre versus Ohio Elections Commission*. He was also
21 speaking at a university, albeit outside of office hours, but
22 he was speaking at a university.

23 Reading from *Sweezy*, this is an important quote, "the
24 essentiality of freedom in the community of American
25 universities is almost self-evident. Teachers and students

1 must always remain free to inquire, to study and to evaluate to
2 gain new maturity and understanding, otherwise our civilization
3 will stagnate and die." Opinion cite 250. Even hate speech is
4 protected under the First Amendment. We cited a plethora of
5 cases on page three, footnote two.

6 As for a response to the Defendant's argument, what
7 speech are we talking about, that is what their argument is.
8 They are scratching their heads, they don't know what speech we
9 are talking about. Defendant can't say they don't know what
10 speech the Plaintiff is referring to when he says he was fired
11 for his speech, such that the Court and jury cannot consider
12 the First Amendment claim. That is what this is about.

13 Everyone knows the speech we are talking about
14 consists of his online speech concerning Sandy Hook and other
15 mass casualty events on his blog, podcasts and social media in
16 the fall of 2013, and continued up to December of 2015, when he
17 was terminated, and included in that was the Pozner fiasco in
18 the *Sun Sentinel*.

19 I can refer the Court to specific testimony if
20 necessary, but the Defendant admitted the blog was no mystery.
21 Diane Alperin and Heather Coltman both admitted to reading his
22 commentary on Sandy Hook in 2013, and we argue even later, as
23 well as the writings related to the Pozners after the op-ed
24 came out. They cited Kurtz and Goffer, and cite other cases in
25 the paper they filed yesterday.

1 Kurtz versus Vickrey. Kurtz's speech, different from
2 Tracy's, consisted of different statements, memoranda and
3 letters published over a period of years, and critically, only
4 some speech related to matters of public concern; the rest was
5 unprotected speech. Thus, the Eleventh Circuit held, and this
6 is a quote, "it would be reasonable for the District Court to
7 separate those instances of speech which clearly do not relate
8 to a matter of public concern from those which do for the
9 purposes of applying the Pickering balancing test and
10 presenting the causation issues to the jury under Mt. Healthy."

11 We recognize it might be relevant for causation
12 purposes, pursuant to the language, to identify the speech.

13 As we have identified, we know what speech we are
14 talking about, and all of it is a matter of public concern.

15 I refer the Court to the Goffer decision, and the same
16 was true here. There the complaint did not identify discrete
17 expressions of speech. Moreover, the speech was made on
18 "different subject matters to different people in a wide range
19 of circumstances."

20 Consequently, the Court held the First Amendment
21 issues -- this is a quote, "First Amendment issues could not be
22 addressed in the unitary or global fashion employed by the
23 Plaintiff and the District Court," and that is the end of the
24 quote, so the Pickering and Connick test could be carried out.

25 I refer to Bailey v. Department of Elementary and

1 Secondary Education which supports our position. There the
2 Plaintiff "failed to describe specifically for the District
3 Court all the speech forming the basis for his claim."

4 Vague references to blog speech, our argument, is
5 inadequate; rather the speech at issue is online speech
6 concerning Sandy Hook and other mass casualty events, including
7 postings related to the Pozner op-ed.

8 All of that speech relate to matters of public concern
9 or interests and form the basis of Plaintiff's theory of
10 causation, and the jury can adequately determine causation from
11 that. Plaintiff has identified discrete expressions on the
12 same online mediums, podcast and social media.

13 Plaintiff has identified when Defendant became aware
14 of this speech and when the Pozner op-ed fiasco ensued, the
15 strict time line everyone is debating.

16 The cases the Defendant relies upon do not say, as the
17 Defendant argues, that the Plaintiff "must point to specific
18 speech he believes was protected" to succeed on his claim or
19 prove causation.

20 Accordingly, the Court can and should determine that
21 Tracy's speech was constitutionally protected.

22 That is the constitutional speech argument. I will be
23 brief, but I would like to make our record.

24 We move for a Judgment as a Matter of Law on Counts 3,
25 4, and 5, constitutional challenges to the policy.

1 The Court should reconsider its earlier rulings on the
2 challenges to the policy, Docket Entries 362 and 392. The
3 Court's prior ruling was based on Hawks, critically, however,
4 Hawks is not a First Amendment case, and we think that
5 distinction deserves revisiting this issue because Courts have
6 noted that there is at least one additional concern regarding
7 vagueness in cases such as ours that implicate the First
8 Amendment, namely the risk of chilling speech, that was not
9 implicated in Hawks.

10 To recap Plaintiff's constitutional vagueness claims,
11 Plaintiff alleged, under 42 U.S.C. Section 1983, that FAU acted
12 in a way that deprived him of a constitutionally or Federally
13 protected right specifically through its conflict of interest
14 policy and how it was used to violate First Amendment rights as
15 applied to him, and broadly, that it violated the rights of
16 others, the facial challenge.

17 The First Amendment prohibits law restricting free
18 speech and the Fourteenth Amendment imposes that limitation on
19 legislation power of states, including their political
20 subdivisions like FAU. The Court correctly allowed Plaintiff's
21 1983 First Amendment retaliation claim to proceed, but not the
22 other First Amendment claims pursuant to the CBA.
23 Respectfully, this was error and should be reconsidered at this
24 time because of a fundamental difference between this case and
25 Hawks.

1 Courts have identified, with respect to vagueness,
2 concerns that "vague laws may trap the innocent by not
3 providing fair warning." That comes from a case called *Grayned*
4 *v. City of Rockford*. All of this will be provided.

5 This is the type of concern that was implicated in
6 *Hawks*. In *Hawks versus City of Pontiac*, it was not about a
7 policy that was allegedly vague as applied on its face that
8 violated free speech. It was about a due process vagueness
9 claim regarding a residency requirement in a CBA that
10 originated from a city charter.

11 Essentially, the holding in *Hawks* is that a residency
12 requirement in a CBA could not be invalidated on vagueness
13 grounds, does not say anything about challenging a school
14 policy for violating the First Amendment on vagueness grounds.

15 I would like to address another case illustrative as
16 to the issue of differences between an ordinary due process
17 claim and free speech, and that is *Hamilton versus U.S. Postal*
18 *Service*, 746 F.2d 1325, an Eighth Circuit decision, 1984.

19 In that case, postal employees subject to a CBA
20 contested their suspensions based on absenteeism at work. They
21 allege the CBA was vague and the employees grieved it and lost.
22 Then they took the case to court and argued the CBA was
23 unconstitutionally vague. The Court rejected the arguments,
24 and the reason why is critical.

25 The Court noted that a constitutional violation, such

1 that the vagueness impinged upon their First Amendment rights,
2 had not been alleged, and says harmonizing discordant
3 provisions of the CBA was the arbitrator's job at the end of
4 the day. That is not this case.

5 Here, Plaintiff has alleged that the policy, the vague
6 policy has impinged and inhibited his free speech.

7 We refer to *Grayned versus City of Rockford*, 408 U.S.
8 104, and *Westbrook versus Teton City School District No. 1*, 918
9 F.Supp. 1475, a Second Circuit decision from Wyoming, 1996.

10 Vagueness claims that implicate the First Amendment
11 are more heavily scrutinized because more is at stake.

12 *Cramp versus Board of Public Instruction of Orange*
13 County, 368 U.S. 278, at pages 287, 88, a U.S. Supreme Court
14 decision, "the vice of unconstitutional vagueness is further
15 aggravated where, as here, the statute in question operates to
16 inhibit the exercise of individual freedoms affirmatively
17 protected by the Constitution. Stricter standards of
18 permissible statutory vagueness may be applied to a statute
19 having a potentially inhibiting effect on speech; a man may the
20 less be required to act on his peril here because the free
21 dissemination of ideas may be the loser."

22 Here, FAU implemented a conflict of interest policy, a
23 Governmental policy that unconstitutionally chilled the speech
24 of Plaintiff and others. The Court previously ruled that it
25 would not consider these challenges based on the premise that

1 the conflict of interest policy was contained in the CBA that
2 Plaintiff signed, but as the Court has heard testimony, the
3 policy is much, much more than that.

4 Further, we ask the Court to look at Exhibits 23 and
5 15. 23 contains a list of all of the things that constitute
6 the policy, including university regulation 5.011, which the
7 Plaintiff never agreed to, the form that Plaintiff never agreed
8 to.

9 Also, we refer for the Court to the signature block
10 contained on the form that Plaintiff never agreed to which
11 says, I hereby certify outside employment or professional
12 activity reported here does not constitute a conflict of
13 interest under Chapter 112 of the Florida Statutes and will not
14 interfere with my assigned duties at Florida Atlantic
15 University.

16 Professor Tracy, when he signed the CBA, could not
17 have waived his First Amendment rights to challenge the policy
18 in this Court because the policy was so vague he could not
19 possibly have understood or have known at the time that any
20 First Amendment rights were implicated by the CBA.

21 Now, we heard waiver before, but waiver of a
22 constitutional right must be knowing and voluntary, if it can
23 even be required at all. I refer the Court to Borough of
24 Duryea, Pennsylvania versus Guarnieri, 564 U.S. 379, a 2011
25 decision. "There are some rights and freedoms so fundamental

1 to liberty that they cannot be bargained away in a contract for
2 public employment. Our responsibility is to ensure that
3 citizens are not deprived of these fundamental rights by
4 working for the Government."

5 It is our argument that the Plaintiff could not have
6 known that the CBA would have been enforced and interpreted by
7 FAU officials in the manner it was to require that he report
8 virtually anything he does outside campus online, including on
9 his personal blog. Blogging is nowhere identified in any rule
10 or policy being subject to disclosure.

11 He thus could not have waived his right to challenge
12 the policy through signing the CBA, because the policy was so
13 vague he could not possibly have known that any First Amendment
14 rights were implicated by the CBA.

15 We previously argued the substantive 1983 claims on
16 First Amendment rights don't need to be grieved. This comes
17 from Patsy and its progeny. I will specifically refer the
18 Court to what was previously cited in our papers.

19 Naurumanchi v. Board of Trustees of Connecticut State
20 University, a Second Circuit decision, 850 F.2d 70, states "nor
21 is it permissible, in light of Patsy v. Board of Regents, to
22 require initial recourse to available state proceedings,
23 including union grievance proceedings, for the enforcement of
24 First Amendment rights protectable in Federal Court pursuant to
25 1983."

1 Now, as the Defendant previously argued, that is a
2 retaliation claim, and we agree.

3 That does not necessarily mean that Professor Tracy
4 had to grieve this vagueness challenge that impinges, that
5 touches upon his First Amendment rights. That is our position.

6 I refer the Court to Clark versus Yosemite Community
7 College District, 785 F.2d 781, Ninth Circuit, 1986.

8 *THE COURT:* It is 20 minutes, wind down.

9 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* In that decision, there is no
10 need to -- I will move on. The Court never reached the merits
11 of our arguments with respect to the policy being content based
12 and vague. I will hit the highlights, but this is stuff that
13 is in Docket Entry 247, and we reraise race those arguments at
14 this time.

15 He policy is unconstitutionally content based and on
16 its face draws distinctions based on the message a
17 speaker conveys; cannot be enforced without reference to the
18 subject matter of the employees' speech to determine whether it
19 what contradicts Defendant's "public interests", which were
20 never defined.

21 The requirement to disclose blogging here serves no
22 legitimate Governmental functioning since the Plaintiff's blog
23 was publicly available to everyone, free speech activity does
24 not present a conflict of interest with the goals of the
25 university, and the Collective Bargaining Agreement says

1 nothing about agreeing to disclose blogging or that outside
2 free speech activity is subject to the CBA or that it must be
3 grieved if violated by Plaintiff.

4 Your Honor, the policy is unconstitutionally vague
5 because reasonable people, including FAU's own faculty and
6 other staff, don't understand what it prohibits, and it
7 encourages discriminatory enforcement and facilitates
8 censorship, as we argued is the case here.

9 Tracy and several other testified they were absolutely
10 confused about the policy and what to report. This is
11 understandable. And the form contains a space for a
12 "Description of employment activity" yet does not include any
13 space to fill out non-employment activity.

14 There's no rule for online speech like blogging or
15 social media, nor could blogging be subject to disclosure as
16 the First Amendment protects the right to engage in anonymous
17 speech. That is stemming from *Tally versus California*, 362
18 u.S. 60, 1960.

19 Your Honor, just to hit the highlights, consider how a
20 conflict of interest is measured under this policy, consider
21 the consequences of non-compliance not set forth in the policy.

22 The redline version is a clear example of that. They
23 didn't know if they should reprimand him for it or terminate
24 him because there are minimal guidelines. The result is
25 arbitrary and selective enforcement and vague as well on its

1 face.

2 As a last note on the issue, I will move on, the First
3 Amendment protects against speakers from being treated
4 differently. Again, in the motion for summary judgment, Docket
5 Entry 247, we argued this. Some faculty members at FAU are
6 allowed to blog or write online without making disclosures.
7 This is commonly referred to as the First Amendment equal
8 protection doctrine and it violates that.

9 We have argued the issue of ripeness which the Court
10 mentioned in the order on this motion. This claim is ripe
11 because Tracy was fired and this circuit, the Eleventh Circuit,
12 under the Wollschlaeger versus Governor, Florida decision,
13 tolerates pre-enforcement challenges that implicate the First
14 Amendment. 848 F.3d, 1293, Eleventh Circuit, 2017.

15 *THE COURT:* Okay, final argument.

16 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* I will be brief. We argue that
17 Coltman and Alperin are not entitled to qualified immunity.
18 The Court should reconsider your ruling on that issue. A
19 reasonable Government official cannot reasonably believe that
20 they can retaliate against an employee based on the exercise of
21 First Amendment rights, even when purportedly acting pursuant
22 to some other policy.

23 There are material facts in dispute with respect to
24 Defendant's purported lawful reason for the firing, which is
25 Plaintiff's alleged insubordination, and it is not established

1 that was an actual motivation.

2 Plaintiff was disciplined under a vague policy that
3 repeatedly went unenforced and about which several faculty
4 members had expressed confusion, including the Plaintiff, and
5 he was on paternity leave at the time and after he said he
6 wanted clarification he was disciplined.

7 Diane Alperin admitted she was waiting to see the blog
8 on the forms, and Heather Coltman thought that the Plaintiff
9 was a nut job and reading his blog and looking for winning
10 metaphors.

11 Plaintiff asks the Court to follow *Bogle v. McClure*,
12 332 F.3rd 1347, Eleventh Circuit, 2003. This is in line with
13 the mixed motives decisions, which are all distinguishable
14 here. In *Bogle*, the Eleventh Circuit concluded that the
15 Plaintiff set forth sufficient evidence suggesting that the
16 Defendant's stated lawful reason, system wide, "was a sham
17 designed to cover up race-based transfers."

18 Viewing that evidence in the light most favorable to
19 the Plaintiff, the record did not indisputably indicate that
20 the Defendants were actually motivated, even in part, by
21 objectively valid reasons. *Bogle* did not require the
22 Defendants to show that they were motivated only by lawful
23 reasons, but concluded that Plaintiffs had put forth enough
24 evidence to call those partial lawful motivations into
25 question.

1 The same is true here, and the Court should revisit
2 that argument.

3 *THE COURT:* Any response from Defense?

4 I didn't know if there is a supplement. You argued
5 your motion in full yesterday, no new evidence was put in. If
6 there is anything you want to supplement, not repetitive, but
7 supplement to what you said yesterday, start with that first,
8 any supplement and then an opportunity to respond by Plaintiff.

9 MS. HUFF: Yes, your Honor. As to the supplement, we
10 would like to add, based on the testimony of Jason Ball, he
11 testified about the timing of the email that Heather Coltman
12 sent to Diane Alperin attaching a draft to the termination
13 decision.

14 We established -- Plaintiff established in that case
15 that the email was sent at 4:23, prior to when the Pozner op-ed
16 was circulated at 4:25. We feel the point was already made,
17 but it appears the email was sent five hours before instead of
18 two minutes before. Either way, they haven't shown that the
19 university administrators knew about the Pozner op-ed piece
20 when they made the termination decision.

21 And we have information that the Pozner speech was not
22 written by Plaintiff and it was critical of actions by
23 Plaintiff that were not a matter of public concern,
24 specifically the certified letter of the copyright claim. That
25 is our supplemental.

1 THE COURT: Okay. Now response to Plaintiff's motion.

2 MS. HUFF: Yes, your Honor.

3 Your Honor, Plaintiff highlights that we have to
4 determine that Plaintiff spoke in his role as a citizen on a
5 matter of public concern. It's impossible to do that until we
6 know specifically what speech he is talking about, and I can
7 illuminate some of those concerns.

8 If they are talking about the blog generally, we have
9 unrefuted evidence from the Plaintiff that he did not write
10 everything on his blog, he had guest authors. We have an
11 exhibit in evidence from a filmmaker who published an open
12 letter, a Canadian filmmaker. We have Freeform Friday where
13 they can post on the blog.

14 The only evidence that we have of Plaintiff's blog
15 speech is two post's, one from December 24, 2012, and one from
16 January 6, 2013. That January 6th post is a time line,
17 Plaintiff testified, where he was summarizing other news
18 articles. I am not sure that counts as his speech, and we
19 don't have any other evidence as to what is on the blog.

20 Yesterday, Plaintiff's counsel mentioned that we have
21 a summary with all of the blog articles in evidence.

22 While that is true, it is merely titles of the blog
23 articles, and a view of the titles shows it is not all about
24 Sandy Hook, there is the Boston Marathon bombing, several other
25 issues, and it is impossible to make a determination about

1 whether the Plaintiff was speaking at all, whether he was
2 speaking as a citizen on public concern, unless you are looking
3 at a specific blog post, and to review those posts and make a
4 determination is the Court's role on that first prong.

5 As to the attempt to expand the speech to the podcast
6 and to social media, we don't have anything in evidence as to
7 the content of the podcast, we don't have a recording, or have
8 a transcript of any podcast episode. As to social media, we
9 don't have anything regarding Plaintiff's media activity.

10 I believe reference was made through a hearsay
11 statement about a Twitter account. Frankly, that cannot be the
12 basis of a First Amendment retaliation claim.

13 As to Plaintiff's attempt to distinguish our case law,
14 the Kurtz case, your Honor, we would submit this is just like
15 the Kurtz case where several memos and oral statements were
16 made over a matter of years. Essentially, that is what
17 Plaintiff is arguing, that he made statements about Sandy Hook
18 on his blog over a matter of years.

19 We need to know what statements they are talking
20 about, whether he was speaking as a citizen or speaking on a
21 matter of public concern.

22 Similarly, this is just like the Goffer case we cited.
23 In that case, the Plaintiff argued that the Plaintiff was
24 making speech on different subject matters and to different
25 people. The same is true here, unrefuted testimony shows that

1 there are several different subject matters discussed in the
2 blog, and we don't have evidence -- you would have to be
3 relying on speculation about what the blog is actually about.
4 We need to see the blog posts they are relying on for the First
5 Amendment retaliation claim.

6 Your Honor, I argued this yesterday, so I want to
7 re-emphasize the point very briefly. The tension related to
8 the Pozner op-ed, all of that happened after the termination
9 decision was made, that is unrefuted in the evidence. We heard
10 Heather Coltman testify she sent a notice to Diane Alperin at
11 4:23 p.m., and all the notice about the Pozners did not begin
12 until 4:25, at the earliest, from FAU's perspective. We would
13 like to preserve the argument that is not -- that is -- Mr.
14 Fitzer was doing a lot of the drafting of that response.

15 I would like to highlight that Plaintiff completely --
16 in their motion today did not address the Pickering balancing
17 at all. It is the Plaintiff's burden to prove that his
18 interest outweighed the university's. Left with what we have,
19 we have evidence, really a cascade of evidence showing the
20 disruption going on at the university in 2013 and again in
21 2015.

22 The case law says that an employer does not have to
23 wait for the disruption to happen; if they reasonably believe
24 that it is going to happen, they can take action.

25 As to the point about if the university has never said

1 this is about Plaintiff's speech, that is true, we maintain
2 that it was about his insubordination. However, there is
3 Eleventh Circuit case law cited to by Ms. Griffin which she has
4 provided me, Bryson versus City of Waycross, 888 F.2d 1562, a
5 1989 case, Eleventh Circuit.

6 In cases where the state denies discharging the
7 employee because of speech, a four stage analysis has evolved,
8 and it goes on to talk about the four stage analysis we have
9 been discussing. The second prong is, if the speech addresses
10 a matter of public concern, then the Court applies the second
11 prong of the Pickering balancing test weighing the employee's
12 First Amendment interest against the state as an employer -- it
13 performs through its employees --

14 *THE COURT:* This was argued yesterday.

15 We need to wrap up. Any points you haven't made
16 yesterday or today?

17 *MS. HUFF:* As to their argument on the
18 reconsideration, we addressed all the points I would raise
19 today, and I believe that is their motion for reconsideration
20 of the partial motion for summary judgment. Our response
21 encapsulates everything I would say today.

22 *THE COURT:* Okay.

23 *MS. HUFF:* Sorry, your Honor, we are trying to get you
24 the Docket Entry for that.

25 *THE COURT:* I can find it. Your docket response to

1 their motion for reconsideration?

2 MS. HUFF: Correct.

3 THE COURT: Okay. All right. Thank you.

4 Okay. We have heard fully from the Plaintiff.

5 MR. BLICKENSDERFER: Unless the Court has any
6 questions.

7 THE COURT: No. We will take a brief recess. Thanks.

8 MS. HUFF: Your Honor, yesterday we were not
9 allowed -- not not allowed -- we did not argue that we believe
10 the sufficiency of the evidence outweighs on the causation
11 prong. Would you hear argument on it briefly? This is a
12 factual issue. We believe it outweighs --

13 THE COURT: How long do you need to argue that?

14 MS. HUFF: A couple of minutes, your Honor.

15 THE COURT: Okay, you may proceed.

16 MS. HUFF: Your Honor, we believe Plaintiff has failed
17 to meet his burden of showing his speech was a substantial
18 motivating factor. You heard repeated testimony from Heather
19 Coltman and Diane Alperin that his repeated acts were
20 insubordination, and Plaintiff did not present any evidence to
21 show this is not the true reason, they relied on unsupported
22 speculation.

23 We discussed yesterday briefly, and I will go through
24 these points quickly, that there is no causation through
25 temporal proximity. We have the 2013 speech, the only speech

1 we have evidence of from the blog, and after three years
2 Plaintiff was permitted to blog, teach on conspiracy theories
3 and was not retaliated against in any way. And in cases where
4 we don't have temporal proximity, there is additional -- we
5 have proof that the employer was contemplating a discipline
6 action before the speech occurred, temporal proximity -- that
7 is 2015, sorry.

8 When there is a significant time gap like here, the
9 Plaintiff must offer evidence to demonstrate causal connection,
10 that could be antagonism or the first opportunity for the
11 employer to retaliate. We already said there is not a pattern
12 of antagonism. As to retaliate, that would be back in -- FAU
13 administrators met with the Plaintiff, discussed his blog with
14 him and gave him all of the tools he needed to keep blogging
15 the way he wanted to, he would simply have to follow the rules
16 of the disclaimer, and he was unable to do that.

17 We made our arguments regarding comparators, I will
18 briefly note those points.

19 *THE COURT:* Only if it is new, there has been a lot
20 about comparators.

21 *MS. HUFF:* I want to re-emphasize that it's the
22 Plaintiff's burden to show pretext once the employer puts the
23 reason forward. There are no valid comparators, or no other
24 evidence that we have seen, that the proffer for the
25 termination was not the correct reason.

1 THE COURT: Okay. Thank you. Is that everything?

2 We will take a brief recess, thanks.

3 *(Thereupon, a short recess was taken.)*

4 THE COURT: Okay, we might have to ask our exhibit
5 helper -- Pauline has to take everything down. I appreciate
6 you trying to help with the exhibits.

7 If we have time at the end it might be nice, I need to
8 make sure those are all in order to give to our jury.

9 So, here is what I am going to do. I am going to
10 first make the ruling on the motions and distribute the packet
11 of the jury instructions that relate to the issues that we
12 discussed.

13 So, the Court has heard argument on the Defendant's
14 motion for Judgment as a Matter of Law. Federal Rule of Civil
15 Procedure 50 (a) states that if a reasonable jury would not
16 have a legally sufficient evidentiary basis to find for a party
17 on an issue, the Court may resolve the issue against the party
18 and may grant a motion for Judgment as a Matter of Law against
19 the party on the claim or defense that, under the controlling
20 law, can be maintained or defeated only with a favorable
21 finding on that issue.

22 The standard that governs a Motion for Judgment as a
23 Matter of Law is that if the facts and inferences point so
24 strongly and overwhelmingly in favor of one party that the
25 Court believes that reasonable men could not arrive at a

1 contrary verdict, granting of the motion is proper. On the
2 other hand, if there is substantial evidence opposed to the
3 motions, that is, evidence of such quality and weight that
4 reasonable and fair-minded men in the exercise of impartial
5 judgment might reach different conclusions, the motions should
6 be denied, and the case submitted to the jury.

7 It is the function of the jury as the traditional
8 finders of fact and not the Court, to weigh conflicting
9 evidence and inferences, and determine the credibility of
10 witnesses.

11 Watts versus Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company,
12 842 F.2d 307, Eleventh Circuit, 1988. All the evidence must be
13 viewed in the light most favorable to the non-moving party.
14 Gupta v. Florida Bd. of Regents, 212 F.3d 571, 582, Eleventh
15 Circuit, 2000. Here, the thrust of the Defendant's argument is
16 that Plaintiff does not have sufficient evidence to establish a
17 prima facie case and, furthermore, that Defendant does not have
18 sufficient evidence that Defendant's non-discriminatory reason
19 for termination, insubordination, was pretextual.

20 Defendant has argued several times through the course
21 of Plaintiff's case that Plaintiff's evidence of comparators is
22 insufficient, that his comparators are simply not similarly
23 situated enough to Plaintiff, and as a result, Plaintiff cannot
24 show a similarly situated employee that, after his particular
25 kind of insubordination, was not terminated.

1 Comparator evidence is not the only type of evidence
2 by which the Plaintiff may establish his claim.

3 "Establishing the elements of the McDonnell Douglas
4 framework is not, and never was intended to be the sine qua
5 non" -- this is all in quotes -- pronounced sinuh quwhy non --
6 for a Plaintiff to survive a summary judgment motion or a
7 motion for Judgment as a Matter of Law, in an employment
8 discrimination case. Accordingly, a Plaintiff's failure to
9 produce a comparator does not necessarily doom the Plaintiff's
10 case. Rather, the Plaintiff will always survive summary
11 judgment, or Judgment as a Matter of Law, if he presents
12 circumstantial evidence that creates a triable issue concerning
13 the employer's discriminatory intent." Smith v.
14 Lockheed-Martin Corp., 644 F.3d 1321, 1328, Eleventh Circuit,
15 2011.

16 Here, the Court extensively evaluated Plaintiff's
17 evidence on summary judgment and determined that Plaintiff has
18 demonstrated "such weaknesses, implausibilities,
19 inconsistencies, incoherencies, or contradictions in the
20 employer's proffered legitimate reasons for its actions that a
21 reasonable fact finder could find them unworthy of credence."

22 Plaintiff's evidence, both at summary judgment and at
23 trial, creates a triable issue of fact, from the perspective of
24 a reasonable juror, as to why he was terminated. Plaintiff has
25 evidence that there was pressure upon Defendant to terminate

1 him because of his speech, pressure that never ceased, despite
2 the passage of time. He has evidence of personal animus
3 against him, due to his speech, by decision makers at
4 Defendant. He has evidence that Defendant continually and
5 carefully monitored the Plaintiff while that pressure was
6 present. He has evidence of a meeting, soon after his speech
7 was public, wherein, if the evidence is viewed in Plaintiff's
8 favor, a plan was created to terminate Plaintiff.

9 If the jury were to agree with Plaintiff that such a
10 plan was formed, evidence then shows that Defendant acted on
11 that plan.

12 The Plaintiff has evidence that the Defendant singled
13 out Plaintiff's online speech as needing a disclaimer drafted
14 specifically by the Defendant. While that particular
15 discipline action ended in a settlement agreement, not
16 termination, the settlement agreement placed restrictions on
17 Plaintiff that, again viewing the evidence in Plaintiff's
18 favor, caused there to be additional grounds in the future to
19 terminate Plaintiff as compared to other faculty members.

20 The evidence has further showed that Defendant's
21 outside activities policy was confusing to some, including
22 Plaintiff, and that the policy underwent revision soon after
23 Plaintiff was terminated. Notwithstanding that revision and
24 earlier confusion, the earlier draft of the policy was applied
25 against Plaintiff, and the policy was applied in a manner that,

1 viewing all evidence in Plaintiff's favor, could show that the
2 Defendant was seizing upon an opportunity to terminate
3 Plaintiff because of his earlier protected speech.

4 In summary, Plaintiff has introduced sufficient
5 evidence to call into question whether Defendant actually
6 terminated Plaintiff for insubordination. In order to prevail
7 on his retaliation claim, Plaintiff is required to "establish a
8 prima facie case by showing, one, statutorily protected
9 expression; two, adverse employment action; and three, a causal
10 link between the protected expression and the adverse action."
11 Goldsmith v. City of Atmore, 996 F.2d 1155, at 1163, Eleventh
12 Circuit, 1993. Plaintiff has evidence in support of all three
13 elements.

14 Finally, the Court addresses a few of the Defendant's
15 specific arguments. Defendant argues that Plaintiff has not
16 properly identified his protected speech. The Court disagrees.
17 Plaintiff's blog postings, particularly his blog postings about
18 Sandy Hook, have been properly identified. A reasonable juror
19 could conclude that the Defendant was aware of Plaintiff's
20 protected speech prior to terminating him and that a causal
21 connection existed between that speech and Plaintiff's
22 termination notwithstanding the passage of time.

23 Furthermore, the Court does not believe the
24 Plaintiff's references to "blog speech" in this case are vague
25 or otherwise do not properly identify Plaintiff's speech. The

1 Court concludes that any time Plaintiff or Defendant reference
2 Plaintiff's "blog speech," both the Court and the jury know
3 exactly what that means -- it means Plaintiff's blog speech on
4 mass casualty events such as school shootings, the Sandy Hook
5 massacre, and Government conspiracies in general.

6 Defendant argues that Plaintiff's speech does not
7 qualify as speech that may be submitted to the jury under a
8 Pickering balance test. The Court will address that in a
9 separate ruling.

10 For all of the foregoing reasons the motion is denied.

11 With respect to Plaintiff's motion for Judgment as a
12 Matter of Law the Court will address -- with respect to
13 Plaintiff's second request for the Court to reconsider a prior
14 ruling on summary judgment, that is improper argument for a
15 motion as a matter of law. A motion must be premised on
16 evidence produced at trial, and evidence at trial cannot
17 establish a claim that is not before the Court.

18 Furthermore, Plaintiff raised arguments not previously
19 brought before the Court on summary judgment, which is an
20 improper basis for a motion for reconsideration, Plaintiff's
21 motion for Judgment as a matter of Law, and the motion on this
22 issue is denied.

23 So, I referred yesterday to the case of Moss versus
24 City of Pembroke Pines at 782 F.3d 613, Eleventh Circuit, 2015
25 that suggests to this Court that the issues that the Court is

1 about to discuss relating to the classification of speech and
2 the Pickering balance is to be determined as a matter of law by
3 the Court and is to be handled at the conclusion of evidence.

4 The Supreme Court has set forth a two-step inquiry
5 into whether the speech of a public employee is
6 constitutionally protected. The first requires determining
7 whether the employee spoke as a citizen on a matter of public
8 concern. If the answer is no, the employee has no First
9 Amendment cause of action based on his employer's reaction to
10 the speech. If the answer is yes, then the possibility of a
11 First Amendment claim arises.

12 The question becomes whether the relevant Government
13 entity had an adequate justification for treating the employee
14 differently from any other member of the general public based
15 on the Government's interest as an employer. *Garcetti v.*
16 *Ceballos*, 547 U.S. 410, 2006.

17 Both steps are questions of law for the Court to
18 resolve. That is *Moss versus City of Pembroke Pines*, 782 F.3d
19 613, Eleventh Circuit, 2015.

20 With respect to the first step of the inquiry, whether
21 a Governmental employee speaks as a private citizen or as a
22 public employee, "when public employees make statements
23 pursuant to their official duties, the employees are
24 not speaking as citizens for First Amendment purposes, and the
25 Constitution does not insulate their communications from

1 employer discipline." That is the Garcetti case, 547 U.S. at
2 421.

3 A determination as to whether an employer is speaking
4 as a private citizen turns on such factors as the "role the
5 speaker occupied" and "the content of the speech." Davis
6 versus McKinney, 518 F.3d 304, 312, Fifth Circuit, 2008.

7 The "central inquiry" is whether "the speech at issue"
8 also in parens, "owes its existence to the employee's
9 professional responsibilities." Garcetti, 547 U.S. at 421.
10 Practical factors that may be relevant to, but are not
11 dispositive of, the inquiry include the employee's job
12 description, whether the speech occurred at the workplace, and
13 whether the speech concerned the subject matter of the
14 employee's job. Moss, 782 F.3d, 618.

15 Here, the Court has considered the evidence on
16 Plaintiff's speech. Plaintiff's speech, which has commonly
17 been referred to in this case as "Plaintiff's blog speech"
18 refers to Plaintiff's blog postings about mass casualty events,
19 school shootings, the Sandy Hook massacre, and Government
20 conspiracies in general. The Court concludes that Plaintiff's
21 blog speech do not owe their existence to Plaintiff's
22 responsibilities as a faculty member at FAU.

23 That speech owes its existence to Plaintiff's personal
24 interest created during his personal time on his personal blog.
25 The Court acknowledges that there is some evidence that a very

1 small portion of Plaintiff's speech may have occurred at his
2 workplace, with FAU equipment, and that there is some general
3 overlap between the subject matter of Plaintiff's online speech
4 and the courses taught by Plaintiff.

5 Even so, as the Eleventh Circuit noted in Moss, these
6 factors which do in totality weigh in favor of finding that the
7 Plaintiff spoke as a private citizen, are not dispositive.
8 What is dispositive is whether the speech owes its existence to
9 Plaintiff's responsibilities as an FAU faculty member.

10 The Court fails to see how there could be an argument
11 to the contrary on this point. FAU is specifically aware of
12 Plaintiff's online blog speech and required Plaintiff to place
13 a custom-drafted disclaimer on his blog proclaiming that the
14 blog speech has no connection with FAU.

15 The Court fails to see how FAU could argue that
16 Plaintiff's online blog speech owed its existence to FAU when
17 Plaintiff utilized a disclaimer stating his speech had no
18 connection to FAU, all at FAU's insistence.

19 Moreover, the "mere fact that a citizen's speech
20 concerns information acquired by virtue of his public
21 employment does not transform that speech into employee
22 speech." *Lane versus Franks*, 134 Supreme Court 2369, at 2379,
23 2014.

24 Finally, the fact that speech that owes its existence
25 to public employment is not protected speech is a doctrine that

1 must be read narrowly to encompass speech that an employee made
2 to further his employment, and not merely be speech that
3 concerns the ordinary responsibilities of employment. Alves
4 versus Board of Regents, 804 F.3d 1149, at 1162, Eleventh
5 Circuit, 2015. FAU even publicly distanced itself from
6 Plaintiff's speech. In conclusion, the Court concludes that
7 Plaintiff's speech in this case was speech that he authored as
8 a private citizen.

9 The Court turns to the second step of the inquiry,
10 whether the Plaintiff spoke on a matter of public concern.
11 This step focuses on whether Plaintiff spoke on matters of
12 public interest or on matters of personal interest. Boyce v.
13 Andrew, 510 F.3d 1333, 1342 to 43, Eleventh Circuit, 2007. To
14 fall within the realm of public concern, an employee's speech
15 must relate to "any matter of political, social, or other
16 concern to the community." Connick v. Myers, 416 U.S. 138,
17 146, 1983.

18 Again, the Court fails to see how FAU even could make
19 an argument disputing this point. Plaintiff did not blog about
20 private matters. Plaintiff did not author speech concerning
21 private matters or internal affairs at FAU. Plaintiff authored
22 speech that focused on national events, which garnered national
23 attention, and focused on his views on gun control and
24 conspiracies entered into by the United States Government.
25 Matters that fall within the ambit of public concern are

1 matters that are the subject of legitimate news interests, and
2 Plaintiff's speech certainly attracted news interest in this
3 case. *Snyder v. Phelps*, 562 U.S. 443, at 453, 2001.

4 It is not for this Court to pass judgment on
5 Plaintiff's views. This Court must only decide whether the
6 views concerned private matters or public matters. The Court
7 concludes that the Plaintiff's speech concerned public matters.

8 The Court must conduct an analysis under *Pickering v.*
9 *Board of Education*, 391 U.S. 563, 1968. Pursuant to *Pickering*,
10 the interests of a Governmental employee must be balanced with
11 the interests the state employer had in promoting the
12 efficiency of the public services which it performs through its
13 employees. The "manner, time, and place of the employee's
14 expression" and the "context in which the dispute arose" are
15 relevant to the *Pickering* balance. *Rankin versus McPherson*,
16 483 U.S. 378, 1987.

17 Also relevant is whether speech impairs discipline by
18 superiors, harmony among co-workers, or otherwise impedes the
19 performance of the speaker's duties and the operation of the
20 employer's enterprise. Also citing to *Rankin*.

21 Here, the Court fails to see how the *Pickering*
22 balancing test could weigh in favor of FAU. FAU has not
23 advanced the position that Plaintiff's free speech impacted
24 Plaintiff's ability to teach, and FAU therefore needed to limit
25 his speech. Plaintiff's performance reviews were excellent.

1 Similarly, FAU has not presented cogent evidence that
2 Plaintiff's speech had a tangible, measurable impact on FAU's
3 ability to provide services to the public. Instead, FAU has
4 advanced the opposite position by repeatedly contending at
5 trial that Plaintiff was not inhibited from his speech in any
6 way, that Plaintiff was told he was free to continue his
7 speech. Plaintiff was not informed by FAU that his speech was
8 impacting FAU's ability to provide services.

9 Similarly, FAU's evidence that Plaintiff's speech
10 impacted FAU operations or internal working relationships
11 relied primarily upon evidence of angry emails, phone calls,
12 and the like.

13 FAU argues a Pickering balancing test should weigh in
14 its favor, citing to many complaints from the public over
15 Plaintiff's speech, a single student withdrawing from classes,
16 and a single donor withdrawing funds from FAU. The Court
17 rejects this argument. FAU did not introduce evidence of the
18 additional cost, such as overtime, that public complaints had
19 upon university operations. There were no riots at FAU, no
20 evidence of protests causally connected to the Plaintiff's
21 speech or disruptions to the actual services offered by FAU.

22 The Court rejects the notion that FAU's evidence of
23 safety concerns precludes Plaintiff's First Amendment
24 protections. For example, while Dr. Coltman testified that she
25 wanted a police presence on campus after Plaintiff's blog

1 postings, there was also evidence at trial of other events on
2 campus that warranted and required a police presence completely
3 unrelated to Plaintiff during the same period of time.

4 What the Court has is evidence of many complaints from
5 the public, which is to be expected with unpopular speech in an
6 age when information can be rapidly disseminated to the entire
7 world through the internet. The First Amendment does not
8 permit a "heckler's veto," wherein the public "shouts down
9 unpopular ideas that stir anger." *Melzer v. Board of
education*, 336 F.3d 185 at 199, Second Circuit, 2003.

11 A community's reaction cannot dictate whether an
12 employee's constitutional rights are protected. This is not
13 a case where the speech at issue carried with it "explosive
14 racial situations in a city already marked by poor relations
15 between a sizable black minority and the city's most important
16 law enforcement agency". See *McMullen versus Carson*, 754 F.2d
17 936, Eleventh Circuit, 1985, balancing Pickering in favor of a
18 law enforcement agency when the employee was an active
19 recruiter for the Klu Klux Klan.

20 FAU also raises an argument that its reputation was so
21 damaged by virtue of Plaintiff's exercise of speech that the
22 Plaintiff's First Amendment protections should be denied on
23 that basis. This was not a trial about the damage to FAU's
24 reputation.

25 FAU did not raise this as an affirmative defense. The

1 Court has not heard cogent, focused testimony on how
2 Plaintiff's speech impacted FAU's enrollment, FAU's standing in
3 the academic community, or any similar contention. FAU has
4 instead consistently maintained that Plaintiff's speech had no
5 impact on its decision to terminate him, and the impact of
6 Plaintiff's speech on FAU was only a tangential issue at trial.
7 Nor has FAU advanced the position at trial that it would have
8 been justified in terminating the Plaintiff on alternative
9 grounds because of the sheer impact that his speech had on the
10 university. The Court rejects FAU's arguments on this point.

11 Evidence at trial on tangible, material impacts on FAU
12 services due to Plaintiff's speech was tangential and not
13 enough to preclude Plaintiff from his First Amendment
14 protections under Pickering. For all of the foregoing reasons,
15 the Court concludes that the Pickering balancing test weighs in
16 favor of Plaintiff. Defendant's motion for Judgment as a
17 Matter of Law is denied as to this issue, and Plaintiff's
18 motion for Judgment as a Matter of Law is granted as to this
19 issue, and Plaintiff's Count 1 may be submitted to the jury.

20 On the jury instructions, if I could just provide you
21 with the last two versions of the jury instructions. Court
22 Exhibit 5 will be a redline version. Court Exhibit 6 is the
23 clean version.

24 I will make two rulings that I think will address the
25 larger issues that were addressed, and then you will see that

1 the red line is very de minimus at this point in light of the
2 Court's rulings and all of the arguments we have had.

3 The Court is going to exclude Defendant's proposed
4 special instruction regarding decision makers. The Defendant
5 pointed to Kamesky v. Dean, 148 F.Appx. 878, Eleventh Circuit,
6 2005, for the proposition that "in the termination context, a
7 decision maker has the power to terminate an employee, not
8 merely the power to recommend termination." That is 879-80.
9 Kamesky, however, is distinguishable from the instant case
10 because it dealt with individual liability. Similarly,
11 Defendant's reliance on the pattern instruction's annotations
12 and comments on "individual liability" is not persuasive
13 because this case is not about individual liability.

14 Although the Court understands the Defendant's concern
15 about argument regarding individuals who did not have
16 decision-making authority, Plaintiff has proffered that it is
17 going to argue that only Alperin and Coltman were involved in
18 the decision to fire Professor Tracy. As long as the argument
19 regarding the decision to terminate Tracy is limited to these
20 two individuals and is based on the evidence admitted during
21 trial, the Court believes that the special instruction
22 regarding decision makers is unnecessary.

23 The rest of the proposed instruction, instructing the
24 jury to not second-guess the wisdom of FAU's business decision
25 if the jury finds it was nondiscriminatory, is redundant

1 because it is covered by the pattern instruction.

2 With respect to the waiver that has to do with the
3 affirmative defense that the Defendant was asking for an
4 instruction on, Defendant acknowledges that it has no case law
5 for its proposed instruction and premises the instruction on
6 the general proposition that any constitutional right can be
7 waived.

8 The Court notes that neither the Defendant's proposed
9 instruction nor its sixth affirmative defense say anything
10 about waiver. Nor does Defendant set forth the legal elements
11 of waiver of a constitutional right, which must be "a
12 voluntary, knowing, and intelligent act done with sufficient
13 awareness of the relevant circumstances and likely
14 consequences."

15 Montas v. United States, 2017 WL 3835957, Southern
16 District of Florida, 2017, citing Brady versus United States,
17 397 U.S. 742, at 748, 1970.

18 What I am going to give the Defendant's counsel an
19 opportunity to do, and to submit by the end of the day, is to,
20 if he wants to, is to address why it did not include the
21 elements of waiver in its instruction or provide the Court with
22 any interrogatory on this defense in its proposed jury verdict
23 form, and why the word "waiver" does not even appear in the
24 proffered instruction, which Defense says is based upon the
25 doctrine of waiver.

1 I also need an explanation of what evidence the
2 Defendant would rely on to establish the defense and, assuming
3 the conduct you are relying on is insubordination, how this
4 conduct results in a waiver of the Plaintiff's First Amendment
5 rights rather than providing an independent, nonconstitutional
6 ground for termination.

7 What I am struggling with is that the Defendant's
8 defense has been entirely based on the proposition that
9 Plaintiff is insubordinate, but insubordination merely provides
10 a nonconstitutional basis to terminate Plaintiff. In other
11 words, if he is insubordinate, he can be terminated because the
12 termination has nothing to do with his constitutional rights.
13 The Court doesn't quite understand how he can waive his
14 constitutional rights through an action, not a written waiver,
15 when that action merely provides, as a matter of law, that he
16 can be terminated for nonconstitutional reasons.

17 At this point, in terms of going over the jury
18 instructions, the waiver of affirmative defense is not to be
19 included in the packet; however, I will give the defense an
20 opportunity, if it chooses to avail itself of that, by five
21 o'clock today to submit something to the Court that addresses
22 these questions that the Court has and what the Court has just
23 stated on the record. And if the Plaintiff files anything by
24 five o'clock today, then I will allow Defense, by five o'clock
25 on Saturday to file a response.

1 This way, I will review it, and if there are any
2 changes to the instructions based on what I have reviewed, I
3 will entertain it, and that can be added to the instructions.

4 I would include with the requirement by five o'clock
5 today, if Defendant chooses to avail itself of that, that you
6 include a proposed jury -- what the proposed jury instruction
7 looks like. If it is the one you have been traveling on all
8 along, and the revisions we have been going through, attach
9 that to your briefing, or if it is something different, attach
10 it to your briefing. If you are proposing a revised version of
11 the verdict form, attach that as well, so I have the proposed
12 instruction and proposed verdict form revision and then the
13 briefing that addresses my questions. And then, by five
14 o'clock on Saturday the Defendant can respond.

15 And so, if that needs to be taken up first thing
16 Monday morning, we will do so. We will all convene by 8:30, I
17 have the jury coming back at 9:00.

18 Who is going to take the lead on the compilation of
19 the jury instructions? Is it going to be the Plaintiff? The
20 Court is not going to make all the copies. Often times it is
21 the Plaintiff who does that.

22 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* I don't mind, your Honor.

23 *THE COURT:* We will talk about logistics. Eight
24 jurors, a set for yourself would be nine, for Defense, ten,
25 Pauline, 11, me, 12.

1 So, I would say to be on the safe side come in with 14
2 sets, clip them, not staple them, in the event something
3 changes like the issue of waiver or anything else that comes
4 up. Nothing else should come up, we are having our fourth
5 conference on the instructions, but it is much easier to have
6 them clipped, not stapled, and you don't have page numbers on
7 them. Everything else is pretty much perfect.

8 Come in with all of the set on Monday of Court Exhibit
9 5. I will not go through the pages no one has had objections
10 to thus far. If you want to flip through until we get to the
11 first page that has a redline on it and I -- you know, expert
12 witness is still in. That should not be in. I just noticed
13 that. Let me see.

14 We can email this if this is helpful to the Plaintiff,
15 this last version, since you are going to be compiling it.

16 MR. BLICKENSDERFER: That would be great.

17 THE COURT: We will do it to the Plaintiff and
18 Defense, we'll email the clean version. We made an error, we
19 did not remove expert witness. Expert witness should come out
20 from the redline version. It doesn't show that it is, but it
21 should.

22 Everything else has been agreed to or the Court has
23 already made a ruling on.

24 The very next place where there is a red line is -- it
25 is hard because there aren't many left -- is the page that --

1 the instruction with public employee, First Amendment claim,
2 the second page.

3 I have taken out the word protected where the pattern
4 called for protected, you may recall there are three different
5 places in the pattern, and refers to it just as speech or a
6 bracket that says describe screech. Where it says speech, I
7 always go with speech, and put in a description. I have gone
8 with what we decided. Blog speech, protected speech, I am
9 taking that out. I believe that can be confusing in light of
10 the fact that both sides agreed that the one paragraph that
11 talked about protected speech, both sides wanted it out.

12 Any time the pattern referred to protected speech, I
13 put speech. I don't think it causes confusion, I think it
14 avoids confusion, and I think we have addressed the important
15 issue that is sort of wrapped up in the issue of protected
16 speech based on the one statement that the Court has made about
17 the Court finding that this is a matter of public concern.

18 I am not seeing exactly where that is. I believe all
19 the rulings the Court has made makes it clear to the jury and
20 not adding protected speech, particularly since we have taken
21 out the paragraph in the pattern that refers to protected
22 speech by agreement of both sides.

23 I don't think it is necessary, I don't think it is
24 prejudicial, and in fact I think it could possibly be confusing
25 in light of removing that one paragraph.

1 Those are the red line versions you see on that page,
2 it does not have the word "protected".

3 Again, in the pattern it would have had protected, and
4 I am simply taking that out and it is being referred to as
5 speech. That is in two instances -- four different instances
6 on that particular page.

7 And then the next -- if you turn to the very next
8 page, you will see similarly in the first paragraph, third line
9 from -- the third line of the paragraph, protected was taken
10 out, the next paragraph, blog and protected was taken out again
11 to be consistent with the pattern insofar as the pattern
12 doesn't call for the descriptive of the speech there and the
13 Court ruled it is not going to use the word protected.

14 Go a few lines down, blog is taken out because the
15 description of the speech was not part of the pattern, and the
16 same type of change is made to the very next page. And
17 otherwise, there are no other changes that have been made.

18 So, what I will do is email to both sides Court
19 Exhibit 6, which is a clean version of that with the expert
20 witness being taken out, and I guess I would ask at this time
21 are there any objections that are not already a matter of
22 record from the Plaintiff?

23 MR. BLICKENSDERFER: Just to be clear, our record was
24 currently the instruction says the Court has already found that
25 Professor Tracy's speech was a matter of public concern.

1 Without protected speech, the jury does not know what public
2 concern is.

3 The Court doesn't have to repeat protected speech if
4 it feels that is not necessary and confusing because some parts
5 use protected, some don't. Just leaving it, it is a matter of
6 public concern, okay, that seems like kind of, without that
7 extra part that this is protected, that means nothing.

8 *THE COURT:* You are talking about the page public
9 employee, First Amendment claim where it says -- which page is
10 on that on?

11 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* The first full page of 4.1, the
12 last sentence.

13 *THE COURT:* The Court has found that Professor Tracy's
14 blog speech was a matter of public concern.

15 That is your concern. You think that doesn't mean
16 anything to the jury so you would persist or reraise your
17 previous request that the language is -- what was the language
18 you used?

19 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* And thus is protected speech.

20 *THE COURT:* Anything else from the Plaintiff not a
21 matter of record?

22 *MR. BLICKENSDERFER:* No, your Honor.

23 *THE COURT:* From the Defense, in response to that
24 comment and anything else that is not a matter of record?

25 *MS. HUFF:* Your Honor, in response to that comment, we

1 believe the way it reads now is consistent with the standard,
2 and there shouldn't be a deviation from the standard on this
3 point and it would be redundant. In the previous line it talks
4 about exercise First Amendment rights, and it is redundant to
5 add and therefore protected speech, that is implied.

6 It would be prejudicial to emphasize their theory of
7 the case over the Defendant's.

8 *THE COURT:* Any other objections that are not a matter
9 of record?

10 *MR. CURLEY:* No new objections, they are all
11 preserved, your Honor.

12 *THE COURT:* What I will do is email to both sides a
13 clean version and we'll definitely have the expert witness out
14 and I'll take a look at what is going to be raised again as to
15 that protected activity, having heard on both sides. It will
16 be in or it won't, and that will be the final version with the
17 Court having made all of its rulings, and the only other issue
18 for the Court -- and, so, what is going to be emailed to
19 Plaintiff's counsel and bring in the 14 copies -- I would say
20 you don't need 14 copies of the verdict form. I will only give
21 one copy of the verdict form and that is the one they get when
22 they go back to deliberate.

23 Bring in a handful, one for yourself, Defense, and one
24 for Pauline and myself, and that will be fine. And again, by
25 five o'clock today if Defendant wants to be heard on the issue

1 of waiver, file something and Plaintiff will respond by 5:00 on
2 Saturday. And then with that, you will have your proposed
3 instruction and proposed verdict form revision, if you are
4 making any, and we will all meet at 8:30, so if there is any
5 last minute addition, the Court will entertain it.

6 It can fairly readily be inserted because there won't
7 be page numbers and there is a clip on the instructions.

8 Does that cover everything from the Plaintiff?

9 MR. BLICKENSDERFER: Yes, your Honor.

10 THE COURT: From the Defense?

11 MR. CURLEY: From the Defense, two things. I expect
12 we will start closing arguments at nine o'clock sharp.

13 THE COURT: Don't you want me to read the jury
14 instructions first?

15 MR. CURLEY: Of course.

16 THE COURT: Nine o'clock sharp I read the jury
17 instructions and turn it over to Plaintiff for closing, and
18 then Defense. Are you still adhering to one hour for Plaintiff
19 and 45 to 60 for the Defendants?

20 MR. LEO: Yes. The Plaintiff will reserve 20 minutes
21 of that time.

22 THE COURT: 40 and 20. Do you want a notice before
23 the 40 and 20 are up?

24 MR. LEO: Five minute warning.

25 THE COURT: On the both of those?

1 MR. CURLEY: Yes.

2 THE COURT: What kind of notice does Defense want?

3 MR. CURLEY: Defense won't require notice.

4 THE COURT: And you heard I am ordering lunch for
5 them, they will be able to eat lunch. There is a lot of work
6 looking at the exhibits. I guess the first question is, did
7 anyone note that there was anything in error in the way the
8 Court has tracked the Plaintiff's and Defendant's exhibits? Do
9 they match? I know you have copies of them. Do they match
10 Plaintiff's version?

11 MR. MEDGEBOW: Yes, with two discrepancies. The Court
12 failed to identify 44 and 59 are ID only.

13 THE COURT: Hold on. We are on Plaintiff's, and
14 Exhibit 44, which I have nothing marked, I should have it
15 marked for ID?

16 MR. MEDGEBOW: Yes.

17 THE COURT: What date was that?

18 MR. MEDGEBOW: I believe it was yesterday -- not
19 yesterday. I believe it was Wednesday, your Honor.

20 THE COURT: Does the Defendant agree that 44 is
21 marked?

22 MR. CURLEY: I don't remember it being marked, that is
23 okay.

24 MR. MEDGEBOW: I conferred --

25 THE COURT: I am marking 44 for ID.

1 MR. LERMAN: Thursday, at the end of the day when Dr.
2 Coltman was testifying, the 6th, your Honor.

3 THE COURT: I will put 12/6 for that. What else?

4 MR. MEDGEBOW: Same thing for 59, ID only, it was the
5 same -- let me double check to see the date. Same date as
6 well.

7 THE COURT: Defendant agrees Plaintiff's 59 on 12/6,
8 should be marked for ID?

9 MR. FEICHT: ID only.

10 THE COURT: How about Defendant's exhibit list?

11 MR. MEDGEBOW: One more. The Court had noted that
12 Plaintiff's 95 was marked for ID only.

13 THE COURT: Just a minute. Well, there is 95, I do
14 have that as marked for ID only.

15 MR. MEDGEBOW: 95 was not marked for ID. It was 95-A
16 and B, so it is 95-A and B as the Court noted as well.

17 THE COURT: Nothing should happen to 95. It should be
18 crossed out?

19 MR. MEDGEBOW: Yes.

20 THE COURT: I have 95, 95-A, B, C.

21 MR. MEDGEBOW: That is correct. 36, it is in
22 evidence, we did in the courtroom a redaction. I will be
23 making an official redacted one Monday morning, and I will show
24 it to the Defense.

25 THE COURT: Plaintiff's 36 is redacted?

1 MR. MEDGEBOW: It is redacted, I am going to bring a
2 better version so the jury cannot see the writing.

3 THE COURT: Yes, on anything and everything redacted,
4 obviously, you all have to get together and make sure it
5 satisfies both of you.

6 So, on Defendant's exhibit list, any discrepancy?

7 MR. FEICHT: A question, not a discrepancy.
8 Defendant's 225 was entered into evidence, that was the podcast
9 recording with redactions. We wanted to make sure the jury had
10 that evidence to listen to if they chose. We wanted to know
11 the Court's preference, if you wanted it on a CD, thumb drive,
12 how we can get it so the jury can listen to 225 in evidence.

13 THE COURT: Exhibit 225 was in, admitted on --

14 THE CLERK: We had a trial where something went back
15 to the jury, the attorneys brought in a clean laptop and a CD
16 with it on it. That is how it was handled and it seemed to go
17 well.

18 THE COURT: I don't know what that means. How long
19 was it again? Remind me. Worst case scenario, I don't want it
20 to keep people up all hours of the night, we can bring them in
21 and have it played in the courtroom. If it causes anybody
22 unreasonable angst, I don't see why we can't bring them into
23 the courtroom and play it.

24 MR. FEICHT: 225-A was our office's unofficial
25 transcript, it was used outside the presence of the jury to

1 assist with argument. We didn't know the Court's preference as
2 far as do we need to put that in the marked for identification
3 purpose pile; and if so, should we redact the portions that
4 show it was a Gunster memo prepared --

5 *THE COURT:* Maybe redact everything other than what
6 was read, be consistent with what was read.

7 Have an ID pile, Plaintiff's pile, Defense pile so you
8 can use it readily. Has everyone checked, are all exhibits
9 there?

10 *MR. MEDGEBOW:* Yes.

11 *THE COURT:* Plaintiff and Defense?

12 *MR. MEDGEBOW:* I only checked Plaintiff's.

13 *THE COURT:* You can represent that all Plaintiff's
14 exhibits admitted into evidence are in one pile and everything
15 marked for ID is in a marked pile. Defense as well?

16 *MR. FEICHT:* Yes.

17 *THE COURT:* Make sure redactions are done properly to
18 everyone's satisfaction. If you are going to use them during
19 closing, that is fine, just put them back. And I will allow
20 you to go through them so you can say on the record they are
21 all there before they are brought back to the jury.

22 *MR. MEDGEBOW:* We have no objection if the Defendant
23 wants to bring in a CD player.

24 *THE COURT:* Okay.

25 *MR. FEICHT:* We will see whatever option is easier, we

1 will try to find a Walkman perhaps. One other thing not in the
2 marked -- in the ID file, Nobody Died at Sandy Hook, we will
3 make sure that is there.

4 *MS. HUFF:* Your Honor, if any changes are made to the
5 jury instructions, we would like to confirm we will have an
6 opportunity to be heard on that.

7 *THE COURT:* Yes. As of right now, they are what they
8 are, and the Court made all of its rulings. What I will give
9 one last thought to is that matter of public concern and
10 protected activity, so you will either see it in or out in the
11 one place. Protected will not be anywhere else. Expert is
12 coming out. As of right now, all objections are a matter of
13 record and that reflects the Court's ruling.

14 *MR. CURLEY:* Notwithstanding that, we would like to be
15 heard if the Court tinkers with the instructions any more.

16 *THE COURT:* I am not going to. They are what they are
17 right now.

18 The only thing I will entertain is what you provide,
19 if you provide anything, with respect to waiver. We will get
20 here at 8:30 and I will let you be heard on that, although I
21 suspect your briefing will be sufficient for the Court to
22 understand your point. So, the Court will make a ruling. If
23 the Court has a question, it will ask a question, otherwise
24 everything is ruled on. I am not tinkering any more with
25 anything.

1 MR. BLICKENSDERFER: Would you like my email?

2 THE COURT: Yes. We have it. Have a great weekend.

3 *(Thereupon, the hearing was concluded.)*

4 * * *

5 I certify that the foregoing is a correct transcript
6 from the record of proceedings in the above matter.

7

8 Date: January 2, 2018

9 /s/ Pauline A. Stipes, Official Federal Reporter

10 Signature of Court Reporter

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